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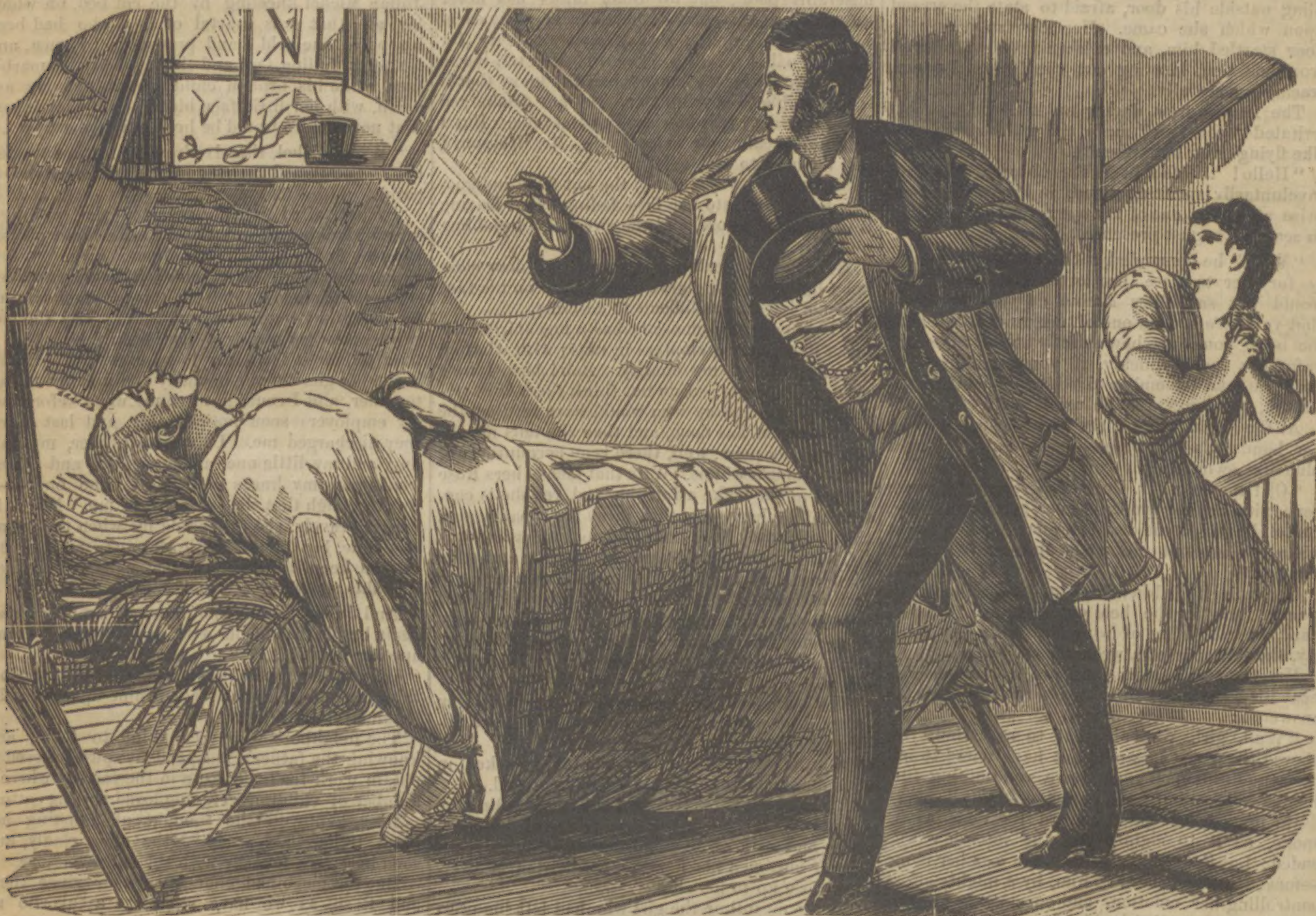
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"OH, GOD! I AM TOO LATE, HE HAS DIED UNCARED FOR AND ALONE!"

Rose Michel; or, The Trials of a Factory Girl.

BY MAUD HILTON.

CHAPTER I. ROSE MICHEL.

The hundred spindles and wheels stood still,
In the giant factory under the hill;
No longer the smoke from the chimneys tall
Rolled heavy and black, over roof and wall;
The work was over, the day was done,
And the workers away to their homes were gone.

—NATHAN D. URMER.

OUR story opens in Lowell, one of the leading manufacturing towns of Massachusetts.

'Tis a bitter winter night, and the wind drives the snow in blinding clouds into the faces of the weary operators flocking in crowds from the outer doors of a large factory in the very heart of the town.

There are hundreds of girls of every age and nationality, some laughing and merry, despite their weariness, being used all their lives to the work by which they earned their bread, and others, wan and weary-

looking, with the blue, pinched expression of countenance that betokens long fasting and over-fatigue.

There was one who lingered behind the others, and retraced her steps back into the factory from which she had just issued. She could not have been over seventeen years of age, but the deadly pallor of her face, and the lines of suffering round the tender mouth, gave her a much more mature appearance.

She was very poorly and thinly clad; her dress of rusty black was patched and darned in several places, and the shawl that she wore gathered tight around her shoulders, was old and threadbare, yet despite the poverty of her attire, despite her position in life, there was an unstudied grace in every movement, an innate refinement betrayed in every word and act that was strangely at variance with her position and surroundings.

She was beautiful, too, with golden hair and deep blue eyes, so rarely met with in one of French nationality. Her beauty and grace, together with the inborn pride that made her seem *with* but not of them, had awakened the envy and hatred of her companions in toil, and many a curious glance followed her movements, as she turned back into the factory on the night of which we write.

"Hem! I bet you anything our lady's gone back to complain to Mr.

Greyson of Barton's treatment of her, poor little fool! it'll be a sorry night's work for her if she does. Mr. Greyson gives Barton full sway and never interferes with his management of our floor. If it wasn't so deuced cold I'd wait and see her comin' out, she wouldn't carry that yellow head of hers so high, you may bet."

The words were accompanied by a loud laugh, as the girl who had uttered them—a tall swarthy-faced individual of doubtful years—toiled along through the snow clinging to the arm of a companion, who seemed to be as much amused as herself in anticipating the probable failure of the poor girl's mission. In the meantime the proprietor of the immense cotton factory of which we write, sat busily engaged in overlooking the books—investigating into the cause of some inaccuracy in the accounts—in one of the lower offices, devoted to his use.

His lips were tightly compressed, and his brow contracted in a frown, that boded ill for the success of the pale young creature who stood trembling outside his door, afraid to state the errand upon which she came. Her low tap upon the door startled him, and a large drop of ink fell from his pen, blotting out the figures he was tracing so carefully.

The frown grew darker on his face, and his irritated "come in," made the girl outside feel like flying from his presence.

"Hello! 'tis the little French girl," he cried, involuntarily speaking aloud, in his extreme surprise at seeing one of his operatives bold enough to seek his august presence.

"Well," he demanded, after waiting impatiently for her to state her errand, "well! what would you say, Miss Michel, do you not know that you have broken one of my rules by seeking me here; you know how strictly these rules are enforced; speak quickly, if you would have me hear you, and remember to report yourself to Mr. Barton, to-morrow, for the usual fine."

At the word "fine" the girl started forward, her hands clasped beseechingly, and her great blue eyes swimming in tears.

"Oh! no, no; Mr. Greyson, I come to crave your pity, to beg your intercession for me. Mr. Barton has fined me day after day, until to-night when my account was made up there was only this left."

Her voice failed her here, and sobs shook her slender form as she held out one little gloveless hand, in the palm of which a few paltry coins lay, the proceeds of a week's hard labor.

Mr. Greyson's stern face did not soften; he beat his foot impatiently upon the carpet as he answered:

"Well, girl, what is that to me. Had you obeyed the rules he would not have dared to impose the fines upon you; have you nothing further to complain of. If not, good-night."

He waved his hand toward the door as he spoke, as if to signify that the interview was ended; but Rose Michel—for such was her name—moved a step nearer to him, by a mighty effort controlling her emotion, and once again her low broken voice sounded in his ear.

"Oh, sir, it is not of this I would complain, but he has threatened to discharge me if I do not get to the factory earlier in the morning. If you will listen to my story you will see how impossible that will be. I live nearly three miles away, in the ruined cottage on the hillside. I am up every morning before the dawn of day, for my father is old and blind, and needs some little care, and there is no one to attend him but me. He is ill, very ill, Mr. Greyson, and I had hoped to have some money to buy for him a few of the comforts for which he craves this week, and the disappointment was very hard to bear; but it does not matter now; only say that he shall not discharge me, promise me this, and I will try, oh, so hard, to deserve your kindness, Mr. Greyson."

The girl had spoken in quick impassioned tones, the French accent betraying her foreign birth, no less than the quaint gestures by which her words were accompanied, gestures so natural to her countrypeople. She was standing so close to the man whom she addressed that her poor garments touched his arm as he toyed idly with the inkstand on the desk before him. If her

words had made any impression on him he did not betray the fact by word or sign. When she had done he turned to her a face cold and impassive as marble, and his voice had no softness in it as he answered:

"I am truly sorry for you, girl, but I do not know how to aid you—I never interfere with Mr. Barton's management. Five minutes can make no difference in your domestic affairs, then why not try to be in your place at the right time in the morning! If you cannot manage this you will be obliged to seek work nearer your home. Here is some money to relieve your immediate wants. I am never wanting in charity."

He held a bill toward her as he spoke, carelessly as one holds out a coin to a beggar.

The girl sprang back like one who had been struck a sudden blow, a flush of indignant shame lighting up her pale young face, and her blue eyes flashing like twin stars.

"Mr. Greyson, I am no beggar; I came to ask for justice, not for charity. I am poor indeed, miserably poor; but my blind father has never eaten a crust these hands have not honestly earned. He is ill, dying, perhaps, but not even for his sake will I accept your alms. You tell me to seek work nearer my home when you know that it is impossible to obtain it, and if I am discharged now every door will be closed against me. But I will not break your rules again, Mr. Greyson, I will try hard to please."

She turned away wearily, the hot flush indignation had called into her face fading away, leaving it paler than before, and the sweet lips trembling piteously.

He did not recall her, but saw the door close upon her retreating figure with a look on his face it would have been difficult to describe.

"By Jove! Mademoiselle has a fine spirit—she looks like a young empress in rags; with what an air she refused my charity. Bah! how I hate pride and poverty. I do not think there is another girl in the factory who would have refused the money as she has done, and then she tells me she is miserably poor; well, there is no accounting for some people's whims. With that face of hers Rose Michel might make a fortune, and yet she is content to toil her young life away for a paltry sum that will barely keep body and soul together."

Thus Mr. Greyson mused, as he again turned to his desk to resume the task Rose Michel's entrance had interrupted. But the face of the working-girl kept constantly coming before him and the page upon which he looked, until at last he pushed it from him impatiently, and rang a silver bell at his elbow.

The summons was answered by a footman in livery, who waited his master's orders in an adjoining office.

"Is the sleigh at the door, Paul?" he asked, in the imperious tone of one used to command.

"Yes, sir, it is ready," said the man, leading the way to the luxurious little vehicle, with its fleecy robes and span of high-spirited horses, while his master buttoned his handsome fur-trimmed overcoat close up to his chin.

In the meantime the girl who had left his presence with such a heavy heart toiled along on foot, folding her thin old shawl close around her slender form, and shivering as each fresh blast of wind blew the snow into her downcast face.

"Oh, my father, my poor old helpless father, it is so bitter cold, and I am afraid the fire will be out. What will he do to-night?" the poor child murmured, while her employer nestled closely in his costly furs, scolding his footman, and grumbling because the horse would not fly faster over the road, that he might sooner reach his home, with its glowing coal fires and couches soft as eider down.

CHAPTER II.

THE TEMPTATION.

THE way was long and toilsome that led to the ruined cot that Rose Michel called home. "The ruined cottage on the hillside," she had said when speaking of it to her employer, and if crumbling walls, shutterless windows, and roof that admitted both rains and snows of winter and broiling heat of summer sun deserved the name,

she had not called it wrong. It was little better than a barn, and had been uninhabited for years before old Julian Michel had taken possession of it ten years previous to the opening of our story, and with his pale, invalid wife and one child, then seven years of age, settled down to a life of poverty and toil.

They were a strange family the nearest neighbors affirmed, the father silent and reserved, the mother stately and ladylike, and the child with the manners of one born to the purple.

For three years they lived in extreme poverty, yet uncomplainingly, the father working like a common laborer, the mother bending from early morn till far into the night over fine needle-work and little Rose poring over books that would have puzzled older heads to study.

At the end of this time the patient face of the mother was missed from its place at the window, and a few days later the neighbors were attracted to the spot by the loud cries of the child, and one, more bold than the rest, entered to find Julian Michel kneeling by the cot bed, on which lay all that was mortal of her who had been his wife, one cold hand pressed in his own, and his tears falling fast and thick upon the marble face, while his orphan child sobbed out her anguish, with her little face hidden on the icy breast that never more would be her resting-place.

"Why, Michel, this is dreadful! What ailed her?" questioned the neighbor, with homely sympathy.

"What ailed her?" repeated the widower, fiercely, looking up quickly, with the light of desperation in his weary, pain-dimmed eyes. "Starvation ailed her! Aye, you start, and turn pale; is it an uncommon thing in this glorious land of freedom, that you doubt my word? For the last two months my eyesight has been failing me; I tried to hide it from my loved ones, but oftentimes in the hot glare of the noonday sun it failed me altogether, and I could not see my work before me. My employers soon noticed this, and last week they discharged me. I thought of her, my darling, and my little one at home here, and almost went upon my knees to them, I, who once—Bah! enough that they discharged me. My wife bore it bravely, she never told me when the bread was gone, but smiled while she was starving herself to keep it for me and her child. Oh, God! that this should be the end, my Laure, my love!"

And Julian Michel had dropped his head down again beside that of his wife, and refused to speak another word.

Only a few weeks later and then the terrible thing he had so much dreaded came upon him, he became totally blind.

The neighbors were very kind to them, and knowing the father's independent spirit, offered to obtain work for little Rose in the factory where a number of children were employed sorting cotton.

Rose, happy in the thought of assisting her blind father, had accepted the offer gladly, and soon became a favorite with the entire factory.

But the place had changed owners since then, and Rose, as we have seen, was a favorite no longer.

Henry Barton, the nephew of Mr. Greyson, held full sway over the floor upon which she worked, and for some unaccountable reason he had taken a violent dislike to her. He lost no opportunity of venting his petty spite on her, and had on the day previous to her visit to his uncle used very insulting language to her in presence of all the working-girls, who were not ill-pleased to see "the lady's" pride taken down.

Rose dared not openly complain of this, for fear of instant dismissal; and as work was at that time very hard to obtain, she was obliged to bear indignities that almost broke her proud young heart, for her beloved father's sake.

As she toiled wearily through the blinding snow on the night of which we write, the tears frozen on her cheeks, and her face white as the snow-drifts around her, the sound of quick, heavy footsteps on the frozen crust of the snow caught her ear. She quickened her pace, for it was a lonely country road upon which she traveled, her house being on the outskirts of the city.

She had gone but a few steps further when a voice arrested her:

"Rose! Rose Michel! stop for a moment. I have a word for your ear alone," and with a thrill of unutterable terror in her heart, Rose recognized the voice of Henry Barton. She stood still until he came up to her, she could not have moved a limb to save her life. "So! so! my dainty miss, you have turned informer, have you? Little fool, did you think your tears and your pretty baby-face would move Walter Greyson one whit? I was in the adjoining office and overheard the whole conversation. Poor satisfaction he gave you, was it not?"

The sneering, cowardly words were accompanied by a rude laugh, as the speaker raised the lantern he carried, and turned its rays on the face of the girl at his side. She shrank away from him with a gesture of utter abhorrence, and her blue eyes flashed on him a look of withering scorn.

"Mr. Barton, is it manly to taunt me thus? you who hold my father's life, as it were, in your hands. If you overheard the story I told your uncle you must know how utterly dependent he is upon the pitiful earnings of these weak hands. If you do not believe that story, come with me now to the poor place I call my home. You will surely pity me then, if you have one spark of human feeling in your heart. Listen, Henry Barton. You have a fair young child growing up at your fireside. She, too, is motherless. What if, in after years, your gold took wings, and left you penniless? What if your cherished one was placed in my position, and found a master such as you have been to me? Ha! you shudder. And think you the heirs to your thousands are dearer to your heart than I am to the blind and helpless invalid who listens for my coming and the sound of my voice through all the long and dreary hours that he passes alone in darkness?"

There was something in the dauntless face upraised to his in the faint flicker of light, that only dimly revealed it through the drifting snow, that cowed him, and made him for one brief moment ashamed of his baseness, even more than did the words she had spoken. But, as if angry at the momentary weakness into which she had betrayed him, he laughed sneeringly as he answered:

"Upon my honor, Rose Michel, you have mistaken your vocation. You should have been an actress. With that tragic face and voice of yours you would have made a fortune on the stage."

Rose did not answer, but she quickened her pace, and he could see the flashing of her great blue eyes in the gloom as he hurried along beside her, seemingly intent on following her to her journey's end.

Suddenly he caught her arm in a grasp that made her cry out with pain, and bending over her till the wind blew her loosened golden hair into his face, spoke in a voice trembling with passion:

"Listen, Rose Michel, I know you are miserably poor; you are too proud to complain, if the fact was not plainly apparent. You are toiling your young life away for a paltry pittance that scarcely keeps body and soul together. You love your helpless father, do you not? You would do much for his sake; you would be happy could you comfort his last hours, and stand by his bedside when the last dread summons comes; you cannot do this if you continue to drudge and toil in a factory. He may die unattended and alone, calling vainly upon your name—"

Rose threw up her hands before her face with an anguished cry.

"My God! my God! why do you torture me so? Why do you paint the picture of his sufferings when I am powerless to alleviate them?"

"You need be powerless no longer, girl, if you will let me help you. Listen, Rose. Once before I told you how I loved you, despite your poverty, despite the utter indifference with which you have ever treated me. You refused my love then, you have seen since how unwise you were to do so. Once again, I tell you I love you, Rose Michel! I have given poor proof of my love, you will say, but every fresh trial I put upon you was but to show you the difference between the life you lead at present and the one you would have led as my—"

He did not finish the sentence, for Rose interrupted him, pausing a little in her rapid walk.

"Mr. Barton, why do you persist in tormenting

me thus? Does a man ever insult and abuse a woman whom he loves and would make his wife, as you have insulted and abused me? You must surely be jesting with me; even when I believed in your sincerity, I refused you, three months ago, because I could not return the love you professed for me. But now! now, Henry Barton, I would not be your wife if a thousand lives depended upon it."

Never since the first day of his meeting with her had Henry Barton so longed to possess the little factory girl as in this hour, when she stood before him in the snow-storm, so beautiful, so brave, so superb in suffering, and so innately pure that she was incapable of understanding the true meaning of his words.

But the feeling of pity that for one brief moment found place in his heart, vanished as quickly, leaving one of baser passion that urged him to the utterance of words that disgraced his manhood.

"You shall give me a different answer, girl. Think of all you are refusing; a comfortable home for yourself and your invalid father, a life of ease and luxury, and a love that will never fail you. You are beautiful as an angel, Rose, my darling, come to me, and you need not leave your poor old father to enter the walls of a factory again."

He attempted to take her in his arms as he spoke, and his hot breath lifted the soft hair from her forehead as he bent closer to her, and pressed his lips to her cold face ere she could realize his intention.

Then, with a cry of terror, she sprang away from him like a frightened hare, fleeing like a spirit through the storm and the darkness of the night, while the baffled villain stood like one transfixed to the spot, his lantern fallen from his hand, and extinguished in the snow.

"Confound the girl, she shall suffer for this; she would refuse to be my wife, indeed—ha! ha! a mighty good joke that. By the Heaven above me, I will possess her! I will break her haughty spirit, and she shall be on bended knees for the shelter of my name to save her from disgrace. Poor little pauper, she shall see what it is to arouse my anger. I will discharge her from the factory to-morrow, and when she sees the old man dying from hunger I will go to her again and ask her the question I asked to-night. She will be a little less independent then, I imagine. We shall see."

Muttering this, Henry Barton retraced his steps back into the road that led to the town. He was a tall, dark-complexioned man, about thirty-five years of age, and had been a widower for eight years. His was a cruel, heartless, sinister nature, and when once his mind was set upon the attainment of any object, he did not scruple to ways or means for its accomplishment. From the first hour he had set eyes on Rose Michel's lovely face, he had singled her out as his victim; but the gentle dignity, the child-like innocence, and the wondering, reproachful looks that would steal into her great blue eyes when any too familiar word fell from his lips, constantly baffled him, and he learned to hate even while he fancied her. He lost no chance of wounding her in the presence of others, for the more she disliked him the greater would be his triumph when he succeeded in his hellish designs.

CHAPTER III.

"WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS."

On, on, through the shuddering gusts of the night sped the frightened girl, her loose, golden curls flying behind her, and the old shawl falling neglected from her shoulders, never pausing, never turning to glance behind, but fleeing swiftly as though a legion of demons pursued her. Panting and breathless, she burst into the single room that was inhabitable of the cottage she called home, and sank down into a chair weak and exhausted.

"Rose, Rose, my child, I thought you would never come. What has kept you so late? The fire is out, and it is bitter cold," cried a querulous voice from the low cot bed, and, by a mighty effort controlling her emotion, Rose hastened to light a small piece of tallow candle, and replied, with assumed cheerfulness:

"Yes, father, I am rather late, I know; but never mind, I will have a good fire here soon, and some supper for you. You are cold and hungry, too, are you not?"

She bent to kiss his lips as she spoke, but could not repress the cry of alarm that the contact wrung from her. Her father's lips were cold, indeed very cold, as they would ever be in death, and there was a look in his sightless eyes such as she had seen creep into those of her mother before death called her from her misery. The old man heard Rose's cry, and guessed aright its meaning.

"My poor child, my darling Rose! You are weeping, I can feel your tears upon my face; I can hear the wild throbbing of your heart. Oh, my loved one, do not grieve for your poor, old, helpless father. He has waited anxiously the last summons; life has long been a burden to me. You have been a blessing to me, my Rose, but you could not have stood the strain much longer; your tender back would have bent beneath the load you have borne so long and so patiently. God will reward my faithful little girl for her goodness, and teach her to bless the hour He called her suffering father home."

The old man's feeble arms were folded around his child, but she drew herself, sobbing passionately, from his embrace, and there was a word of reproach in her gentle voice, when she spoke again.

"Father, how can you speak so hopefully of death, when you know that you will leave me alone, alone, all alone in the wide, wide world? Oh, God, it is too hard, too hard! I cannot say, 'Thy will be done.'"

She had thrown herself prostrate on the bare floor by the bedside, working like one in convulsions, in her awful anguish, and for a long time even the feeble voice of her father, calling her name in piteous tones of entreaty, failed to arouse her from the stupor of grief into which she had fallen. At last she grew calmer, and dropped her golden head on the pillow beside him, while she kissed away the tears that were streaming down his aged cheeks.

"There! My father, it is over now; I was wrong to rebel against the will of God, but it was hard, oh, so hard, to realize the blow in store for me. Perhaps we are frightened unnecessarily. Kiss me once, dearest father, and try to sleep, while I run to the grocery for some fuel."

Once again he drew her to his breast, holding her long, while his pale lips moved in silent prayer; then he released her and turned his head wearily to the wall, closing his sightless eyes to sleep.

Rose took the coins from her pocket which she had shown to Mr. Greyson as the proceeds of her week's labor, and looked at them long and earnestly, as if calculating what she could purchase with them; then drew from her finger a slender gold ring, her mother's wedding ring, and pressed it over and over again to her lips, while tears blinded her so that she could hardly see the little shining circlet.

"My mother! my mother! 'tis the last of all! but when all else fails, this, too, must go—when all else fails."

And, slipping the ring again upon her finger, she caught up a worn basket from the table and hurried out again into the storm with the coins clasped tightly in her hand. She had not a great distance to go for the groceries she required, and yet she glanced around her nervously every minute as if fearful of being followed by the man whose touch had filled her with such unutterable horror.

Reaching the store in safety, she entered with a wildly throbbing heart, knowing the greeting that awaited her.

The proprietor, a penurious and harsh spoken German, came smilingly toward her, but his face changed quickly as she held out her hand with the paltry sum it contained, and she said in a trembling voice:

"Mr. Shultz, I want some wood and coal, and a few articles of groceries. I cannot pay you what I owe you though, for I have only this; you will trust me still another week, will you not?"

An angry flush rose to the cheek of the German, and Rose dropped her eyes to avoid his piti-

less gaze. It was very galling to her pride to plead with one so ignorant and low-bred, but she was suffering for her father's sake, and choking back the hot, rebellious tears that rose to her eyes, she laid one little blue-veined hand upon his arm, and in a low, quivering voice that would have melted any heart had it been made of human mould, looked up into his angry face and spoke again.

"Mr. Schultz, you will not refuse us to-night; my father is dying; he may not live till morning. Our hearth is fireless, our cupboard is empty, and we have no means to replenish either until I receive another week's earnings. Surely you, who are a father, will have some little pity for me."

The sweet broken voice failed here, the golden head dropped forward on her breast, and for one brief moment she seemed like one unconscious of her surroundings.

But Schultz prided himself on his wonderful business abilities, and shook his head decidedly while he paced the floor, his hands in his ample pockets, as he replied to her appeal:

"No, no, miss. I not do piziness in dot vav. You say I be a fader, und if I drust everypody like dot, I hafe no money when I be olt like your fader. No, no, I not do piziness dot vav. I dakes de money vhat you owes me, but I gife you no more drust."

Rose, almost stung to madness by his cruelty, threw down the money she held in her hand.

"Take it then!" she cried, "and examine this; it is solid gold; is it worth the few paltry articles I owe?"

She drew her mother's wedding ring from her finger as she spoke. All else had indeed failed.

The German examined it with glistening eyes.

"Yes, dot vill do for dis time. I gife you vhat you vants," he replied, putting the ring carefully away in his vest pocket and taking her basket from the floor.

A few moments later she wended her way homeward with the articles she needed in the basket on her arm, and the German's boy following with a small quantity of coal and wood.

Her father was sleeping when she reached her home, and in a few moments she had a bright fire and a few slices of toast and a cup of hot tea prepared for him.

For her own supper she ate but a small piece of the stale loaf left in the cupboard, knowing that another week must elapse ere she would have the means of purchasing more. The old man slept long, but she did not disturb him. Sitting by his bedside until the night was far advanced, with her sweet pale face hidden in her clasped hands, weeping softly and thinking of the days to come, when the ruined cottage would be empty, and no living voice to welcome her coming or bless her when she left in the morning to begin the labors of the day.

At last he awakened and called her name. She was bending over him in an instant, and raising his white head higher on the pillow, while she held the warm tea to his parched lips. He drank it gratefully, and, with a whispered blessing on his lips, sank into a heavy sleep again, leaving her to keep her ceaseless vigil as before.

The first faint streak of dawn reddened the eastern sky as the golden head of the weary watcher fell forward on the rude pillow, and Rose, utterly overcome, slept heavily. Cold, hunger and exhaustion had done their work, and for a time she slept on dreamlessly, painlessly, without a thought of the morrow. The broad daylight awakened her, and she sprang to her feet in terror, glancing hastily at the clock on the mantel shelf.

"My God! I have overslept myself, I am late; what shall I do?" she whispered breathlessly, glancing around her in utter bewilderment.

Bending over her father, for a moment she found that he was sleeping still, and after tucking the scanty bed-clothing closely around him, and putting a little more coal on the fire, she placed some toast and tea on a chair within reach of his hand, and pressing a hasty kiss on his lips, wrapped her thin shawl around her, and without tasting as much as a drink of water, turned away from him to leave him for the noise of the factory and

the presence of the man whom she hated and feared.

At the door she paused, as if some unseen hand forced her back, returned to his bedside, and flung her arms around him with a passionate cry of pain.

"Oh, father! father! why must I leave you thus? Speak to me once, my heart is breaking."

Her piteous voice awakened him, although he did not catch the tenor of her words, and opening his brown, sightless eyes he smiled upon her, and opened his feeble arms to clasp her to his breast.

"What is it, my darling child? I have had such pleasant dreams, and we were so happy; why did you awaken me—why do you not try to sleep?"

"It is nothing, my father, and I must leave you. I could not go without your blessing. Oh, father, your eyes are brighter, your lips are warm against mine; you are much better than you were last night, much better. Fold your arms close around me and kiss me again. I am happy, indeed, so happy, my father, my dearest; God has heard my prayer, He will spare you to me."

The little head, with its wealth of golden curls, was on his breast. The sweet, quivering lips were pressed tightly against his own, and he could not find words to destroy the fond hopes she cherished, but folding her close to the heart that would so soon cease to beat, he murmured in a voice grown fainter since he last had spoken:

"My precious child, my darling Rose, may the God of the orphan bless and guard you ever, and guide your faltering steps in the right path. You have been a comfort and joy to me all your life, sweet one; you have never caused me a moment's pain. Go now, my beloved child, and may all the blessings of Heaven follow and be with you always."

With one lingering, clinging kiss upon his lips she left him then, keeping her tearful eyes fixed upon him until the door closed between them.

"He looks better, so much better, and still I feel as if I were leaving his grave," she whispered, with a shudder, and a strange, awed look on her pale, young face.

With fleet steps, despite her weariness, she hurried along in the direction of the factory, praying as she went, that she might not be discharged, even while the face of the man who held her fate in his hand rose like a nightmare before her.

The factory bells rang while she was yet half a mile from her destination, and her heart sank within her.

She was weak from long fasting, yet she quickened her rapid pace, and she ran with the speed of an antelope along the street, until she arrived at the factory, faint with exhaustion and fatigue, just five minutes behind time.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WARNING.

With a heart full of bitterness toward the poor girl who had had the courage to resist his pleadings and repel his temptations, Henry Barton entered his luxurious home, where his only child, a pretty blue-eyed girl of nine years, flew into his arms and welcomed him with her innocent kisses.

While he held her close to him, looking down into the fair, chubby face upon his breast, Rose Michel's words recurred to him.

Would his gold ever "take wings and fly?" and would the day ever come when this cherished little one would be tempted even as she had been?

He drove the thought from him with a smile of derision, but he could not entirely forget the tone in which the words had been uttered.

He put the child gently from him, with a kiss upon the laughing lips.

"There, go, Clarice, papa is tired, darling."

When the little one had left him, he paced the floor of his study like a caged lion, with an angry, baffled look on his darkly handsome face, and his hands locked tightly behind him.

"Curse the girl," he muttered, between his clenched teeth, "she makes me feel like a coward; I hate her even while I would give ten years of my life to possess her—pooh! what fools woman makes of us all! We would shrink from the thought of cheating a man a dollar while we sink

our souls in guilt for a woman's sake. By fair means or foul, Rose Michel shall be mine. Her beauty maddens me, although her scornful indifference makes me hate her. While she is out of my sight I could curse myself for my folly, but when under the witchery of her presence I envy the little cotton-pickers the smiles she gives them. Idiot that I am to be snared by the golden locks and azure eyes of a poor factory girl, when I might take my choice from the proudest ladies of the land."

Unconsciously speaking his thoughts aloud, Henry Barton walked backward and forward for nearly an hour, with his brow closely knit and an angry scowl on his dark face.

At last he paused in his walk to pull a crimson bell cord, and then drawing back the heavy velvet curtains that shaded the window, looked out into the darkness of the night and the whirling snow flakes with eyes that saw not that on which they gazed. Scarcely a moment had passed before a servant answered his summons. A crafty, cunning, soft-spoken fellow, entirely in his confidence. He had often been employed by Barton on errands similar to the one he was about to send him on now; and with a face like a mask of marble he slipped the bolt and even tried the door to make sure that it was fastened, then approached the chair into which Barton had flung himself, and spoke in a slow, oily voice that accorded well with the cat-like tread and gliding motion habitual to him.

"Well, sir, I am at your service, have you any more work for me to do?"

There was a decided emphasis on the word *more*, and Barton looked up quickly, a flash of anger in his black eyes.

"Take care how you speak to me, fellow! I have paid you for the work you allude to; beware how you remind me of it. Obey my instructions without comment, or I will give you your walking papers without an hour's notice."

The servant bowed humbly, without speaking, but he dropped the lids over his glittering eyes, to hide the dangerous light in their gray depths, while his master continued:

"Your mother is still living and well, is she not? She still occupies the cot in the woods on my property up the Boston Road?"

"Yes, sir," the man replied humbly, "thanks to your kindness she is fixed quite comfortably there."

"Waiving the question of my kindness, I will tell you what I wish you to do. Take off that livery you wear, put on plain clothes and go quickly as possible to Boston; purchase neat, substantial furniture enough to fit up a couple of rooms in the cottage alluded to; have the rooms cleaned, and everything arranged; and above all see that the windows and doors are well secured."

The last words were spoken in a significant tone, and the dark glowing eyes of Harry Barton were fastened upon the servant's face, with an eager, questioning look, as if he were anxious to know whether or not his instructions were understood.

The man bowed, and smiled knowingly, while he replied:

"I understand you, sir, you may trust me; I will have everything prepared to your satisfaction, I assure you; have you any further instruction for me to-night?"

Barton paused before replying, and in the act of speaking was interrupted by a loud peal at the door bell. He started to his feet angrily, with a downward glance at his business suit, which he had not changed since his return from the fruitless journey he had taken in following Rose Michel.

"Leave me, Harper! open the door, and be careful whom you admit to-night," he exclaimed, and with another low bow the servant left the apartment, returning in a moment to usher in Mr. Walter Greyson, his master's uncle.

"Why, uncle! this is an unexpected pleasure—I have been busily engaged in writing all evening, and have not even taken time to dress. You will excuse my appearance, I am sure," he exclaimed, going forward to meet his uncle, with an apparently cordial welcome.

"No apologies necessary, Harry, I was feeling

so confoundedly lonesome in my bachelor's hall to-night, that I thought I would call on you to pass an hour away," Greyson replied, sinking with a sigh of satisfaction into a crimson couch drawn up before the fire.

For an hour or more they conversed on business matters, and the night was pretty well advanced when the visitor arose to take his departure.

Suddenly, as he was drawing on his gloves and fastening his great coat close around him, he exclaimed:

"By the way, Harry, I meant to speak to you about the little French girl who works upon your floor. She was telling me to-night you had threatened to discharge her. How is it you cannot get along with her? She is beautiful as Venus de Milo, and proud as a young empress; she is above the position she occupies, and every word she speaks stamps her a lady, despite her poverty. She told me her pitiful story to-night of a blind father, ill and suffering, and with no one to depend on but herself, no hand to provide for him but hers. She is the first woman who has aroused my sympathy in years, the first whose voice has ever stirred my heart since she—you know to whom I allude—proved false to me. Rose Michel is innocent and pure as an angel, I would not be afraid to stake my fortune on the assertion. She certainly deserves a better fate than that to which she seems doomed. The girl is nothing to me, and as you know, Harry, I never interfere with your management; but I would grieve to think you had sent one so young and helpless adrift on the cold, pitiless world. I offered her money to relieve her immediate wants, but she refused it with the air of one who had never accepted charity. I am opposed to the foolish pride that leads one to scorn to accept a gift; but there is something in Rose Michel's face that recalls to me the memory of my sister, your mother's sister, Harry, the blue-eyed girl who played by my side in childhood; she, like Rose Michel, was proud and independent. She married a French nobleman who was traveling through this country for the benefit of his health, and my father, who had long desired her for another, never forgave her for disobeying his wishes. She went with her husband to France, and for a long time we heard nothing of her. At last news came to us that she had given birth to a daughter, and that her husband was obliged to fly from the country for some political reason. Her letter did not state, but we afterwards learned, that his property had been confiscated, and that they had left the country almost destitute. We have never since learned whether she is living or dead, and I had almost succeeded in banishing the memory of her sweet, pale face from my heart, when Rose Michel came like a spirit before me. She bears a marvelous resemblance to my lost sister, Harry, and for that sister's sake I would ask you to deal gently with her. You will think I have grown sentimental, will you not? Well, you may be right, Harry, I cannot account for the feeling that is over me to-night. I fell asleep in my arm-chair by the fire, after returning from the factory to-night, and while I slept I dreamt a strange dream. In the vision my fancy conjured up, Rose Michel rose before me, plainly as I saw her in the office of the factory a few hours before. Her face was deadly pale, and her golden hair hung in disheveled masses round her shoulders. She was wretchedly clad, and from her great blue eyes the tears were streaming, as she sped like a spirit along a lonely country road, closely pursued by a man who every now and then stretched out his hand to grasp her slender form. He had almost reached her, his outstretched hands had just touched her garments, when a spirit, with robes white as the snow on the ground without, descended from the clouds. About this strange visitant there was a light that was fairly dazzling like the sun, and from within the shining circle that surrounded it, a face looked out, the face of my lost sister. At sight of this strange intruder, the man, who until now, had followed Rose Michel, turned on his heel, and with a cry of rage and despair, fled away through the darkness of the night. As he did so, his face was revealed to

me. Your face, Harry Barton, plain as I see it this moment before me."

Walter Greyson paused, and for a moment there was a dead silence. He was himself the first to speak.

"The dream has made a strange impression on me, Harry. When the little factory girl came to me to-night, I sent her from me without one kind word. I ridiculed her false pride, and doubted her story. But now, when I think of her, the face of the lost companion of my boyhood rises before me, and I feel—unaccountable as the feeling may be—that there is some affinity between the spirit of that sister and the little factory girl who so much resembles her. You may smile at my folly, Harry, but I cannot banish the thought, and for the sake of her to whom she bears so remarkable a resemblance, I would ask you to deal gently with her."

The man toyed idly with one of his gloves as he spoke, keeping his eyes averted, as if ashamed of his own words, and never glanced into his nephew's face.

Henry Barton had grown as pale as death while his uncle related his dream, and the beating of his heart was plainly audible in the hushed silence that followed.

By an effort controlling his emotions he said, laughingly: "Why, my dear uncle, you have almost succeeded in making me as superstitious as my coachman, who believes that when he shudders that someone is walking over his grave. Your dream was a strange one, to be sure, but a very ridiculous one, I should say, for surely neither the sister nor the nephew of Walter Greyson have anything in common with a poor factory girl."

He laughed again when he had concluded, puffing the smoke from a cigar he had just lighted, but despite his pretended indifference there was a trembling in his voice that betrayed him, and caused his uncle to glance sharply in his face.

When the latter bade him good-night at the door he hesitated after the words were spoken, and meeting the glance of his nephew, said in a tone half entreaty and half command:

"Remember, Harry, you are not to discharge Rose Michel. There may be nothing in common between us; but should ill betide her I would never forgive myself; think what you will of my folly but remember my warning, and take care that you do not disobey me."

He glanced meaningfully into his nephew's face as he spoke, and nodding a careless farewell, sprang into his sleigh and drove away. Barton re-entered the room they had just left, his face drawn and haggard, and his black eyes flashing fire. When he had closed the door behind him he flung himself into the chair his uncle had just vacated, and laughed aloud.

"Ha! ha! my bright-eyed Rose, you have another wealthy suitor; my worthy uncle is in love with your white baby face—bah! if he knew the effect his warning has taken on me he would have cut his tongue out rather than have uttered it. It only makes me the more anxious to possess you; it would take more than the spirit of my unknown aunt to drive me from my purpose. You shall leave the factory to-morrow for the shelter of my arms; I will break your proud spirit, by the God above me, or I will break your heart."

He rang the bell at his elbow as he spoke, and Harper again answered the summons. For half an hour they were closeted together, and when the servant left his master's presence, Rose Michel's fate was sealed.

CHAPTER V.

CAUGHT IN THE WHEEL.

THE girls were all in their places when Rose entered the work-room, and she closed her eyes with an involuntary shudder as she caught Henry Barton's glance fixed upon her with an expression of devilish malignancy.

"He will surely discharge me to-day. He will seize this opportunity of punishing me for my conduct towards him last night. Oh, my father,

my father! what will become of us if he does?" she murmured, removing her hat and shawl, and hanging them in the usual place, hoping to find some hope that her fears might be groundless.

Some of the girls looked up as she passed them on her way to her place, with more of pity in their glances than they had ever bestowed on her.

Forcing back the tears that rose to her eyes, she took her seat as usual, with a pleasant word of greeting to the girl who sat nearest her, the only one of the hundred by whom she was surrounded that ever gave her a kindly word.

This girl, Minnie Deane by name, was an orphan, and utterly friendless. She had seen better days, and the memory of what "might have been" had Heaven spared her dear ones, was ever with her, and made her too gloomy a companion to suit the tastes of the careless factory girls, who, after their day's toil was over, forgot the hardships of their lot, and enjoyed the simple pleasures afforded them with more of real pleasure than many a wealthy lady would enjoy the flattering homage of a courtly train.

Minnie Deane and Rose Michel had long been counted fast friends, although they had never spoken half a dozen words outside the factory walls; but by treating Rose with common respect she had won the enmity of her companions.

She watched Rose's fair face to-day with more than usual interest, noting its deadly pallor and the swollen eye-lids that betrayed her.

When the noon-day bell rang as a signal for the girls to partake of the luncheon with which they all came provided, Rose, who had forgotten, in the agitation and excitement under which she labored when leaving home, to provide herself with the usual scanty meal, dropped her head wearily on her loom, glad to rest her tired eyes.

Her head was throbbing and aching so that it seemed as if her temples would burst, and this brief rest was very welcome to her. She was weak with long fasting, but scarcely was conscious of the feeling of hunger. Her whole heart seemed to strain out to her beloved father, lying sick and alone in the desolate home she had left so short time ago.

Minnie Deane, with the napkin in which her lunch was wrapped still unopened in her hand, came softly to her side, and passing her arm around her waist, whispered in her ear:

"Dear Rose, you have forgotten your lunch; will you not have a part of mine? Do not shake your head; you know I have often partaken of yours when I had none of my own, when I came without it, not because I forgot it, but because I had none to bring. Do not refuse me, please, you will make me very unhappy."

Minnie had divided the bread and butter her napkin contained in equal shares, and held one of them toward Rose with such a pleading, wistful look in her soft, gray eyes that the poor girl had not the heart to refuse her.

Rose took the bread and tried to eat it, but a lump seemed to rise in her throat, and a passionate sob broke from her overburdened heart as she dropped her head on Minnie's shoulder, weeping bitterly.

"Oh, Minnie, I cannot eat it! forgive me, darling; it chokes me, the bread of charity."

When the words were spoken she would have given worlds to recall them, but it was too late.

Minnie's breast heaved convulsively, and the large, gray eyes filled with tears, but she only pressed her companion's hand and put her lunch away untasted. Her heart was too full for speech.

The luncheon was not half over when a message was sent to Rose summoning her to Mr. Barton's office.

She sprang to her feet in terror when the message was delivered, every atom of color fading from her face, leaving her white to the very lips.

"No, no, I cannot go, I will not go!" she cried, excitedly; then recollecting the power he held over her, and that he might send her adrift if she disobeyed him, she caught the arm of the messenger, as he was turning away, and in a voice that shook with emotion she could not control:

"I will go with you, I had forgotten."

The man looked at her as if he thought she had taken leave of her senses, but silently led the

way to Henry Barton's office, which was situated on the same floor. Her heart throbbed wildly, and when she found herself alone with the man whom she both hated and feared, she was obliged to lean against the back of a chair for support. He came toward her smilingly, and bent down that he might look into her face while he said:

"Well, Miss Rose, have you thought better of the offer I made you last night, or do you still prefer toil and starvation to the life of ease and luxury I offer you? Think well before you answer me, for this is the last chance I will give you to decide for yourself."

The question she was called upon to answer seemed to give her sudden strength. She raised her drooping head and her eyes met his unquailingly, with a look of doubtless defiance in their azure depths as she replied:

"Mr. Barton, you have my answer. I would not be your wife if I were compelled to beg my bread from door to door. You can but rob me of my employment, and the shelter of the almshouse is preferable to the honor you would confer upon me."

The rash words aroused all the evil in the man's nature. He laughed long and loudly, and catching the girl's arm, in a grasp that made her cry out in pain, hissed into her ear:

"My wife, indeed! Fool! think you I would stoop to wed a pauper like you? Poor little simpleton! I have never entertained such a thought. I would have been a true friend to you had you accepted my offer, but you bid me do my worst. I will make you rue the day you were mad enough to defy me. Now go! but remember, as sure as there is a God above us, you shall yet beg on bended knees for the place you this day refused so haughtily."

When the poor girl realized the villain's true meaning a cry of unutterable horror broke from her lips; she sprang towards the door with a look in her blue eyes like that seen in the pitiful orbs of an animal hunted down.

He put out no detaining hand, and she passed out into the work-room, where the wheels were again whirling round at full speed, the dinner hour being over.

There was a mist that almost blinded her, and she could scarcely see where she walked. She tottered like a drunken person, her brain reeled, and there was a sound in her ears like the rushing of many waters.

She was near to one of the great wheels, when with a shriek that rang loud and shrill through the large room, Minnie Deane sprang to her feet, crying wildly:

"Back! back, Rose! the wheel! My God!"

A thrill of horror rang through the hearts of the assembled crowd; for every eye followed the direction of Minnie's pointing finger. The sight that met their gaze froze the blood in their veins. Minnie's warning had come too late; Rose's dress had caught on one of the bolts of the great fly wheel and she was being lifted up and whirled around with fearful rapidity.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LISTENER AT THE DOOR.

You thought in your scorn of pity and laws
That Want and Hunger would plead your cause,
Where lying lip and crafty smile
By wealth supported would fail to beguile;
But know, oh, monster of meanness! who
The lone and the orphaned would still pursue,
That some souls are proof against silver and gold—
Ay! proof against poverty, hunger and cold.

—N. D. URNER.

HENRY BARTON stood for a moment and gazed after Rose with a look on his dark face it would have been difficult to interpret aright.

In a couple of days the cot in the woods on the Boston road would be fitted up according to his directions.

"T'would be a safe cage in which to imprison his bird," he told himself, and a smile of satisfaction parted his proudly curved lips, as he thought what an easy job it would be to get her in his power, as she traveled homeward along the lonely road that led to her wretched habitation.

The smile of anticipated triumph was still on

his lips when Minnie Deane's cry rang out loud and long above the din of the whirling wheels: "Back! back, Rose! The wheel! My God!"

He understood in a moment from the wildly uttered words that something dreadful had happened, and with one bound he sprang out into the work-room.

His dark face grew fairly livid, and his feet scarcely touched the ground as he darted to the scene of the accident; but another was before him in the attempt to save her.

The engineer, Archie Wallace, had been adjusting a belt attached to the wheel when the girl's dress caught, and in less time than it takes to write the words he had sprang into the engine house and stopped the rapid revolution of the giant wheel.

Scarcely a second had elapsed, but in the brief space of time the unfortunate girl was frightfully crushed and mangled, and when her form again descended towards the floor, and Henry Barton caught her in his arms and drew her from the wheel, she was senseless and bleeding.

"She is dead! she is dead!" was the cry that arose from a dozen of the by-standers, as her small, regal head, with its wealth of golden hair, fell heavily on his shoulders, and her blue eyes, dull and sightless, and still wearing the look of awful horror that had crept into them when first she realized her danger, stared fixedly before her.

Barton's face was ghastly as her own; he trembled so that he could scarce support her, and in a voice that sounded husky and strange commanded the workman who stood nearest him:

"Go at once for Dr. Dawson; he lives but a square from here; bring him back at once, and five-dollars will be added to your wages next week."

The man needed no second bidding, five dollars was not so easily earned that he could afford to throw the chance away. While he was absent on his errand, Barton had Rose Michel placed on a sofa in his private office, and Minnie Deane, who had insisted on following her injured friend, notwithstanding the assistant manager's imperative command that the girls should resume their places and go on with their work.

The machinery was again in motion, and everything was going on as before, and were it not for the awed and frightened look on the faces of the operatives, no one to have entered the work-room would have suspected that a frightful accident had so recently happened in their midst.

The workman flying down the stairs two steps at a time on his way to the doctor's, ran against a gentleman emerging from one of the lower floors.

"You stupid loon, why do you not keep your eyes open? Where are you going at such a mad speed?" the gentleman exclaimed angrily, knocked almost breathless by the force with which Barton's messenger ran into him.

"Oh! Mr. Greyson, the little French girl above stairs has been caught in the big wheel, and it's kilt entirely I think she is, sur; and it's fur the docther they've sint me, sure," called back the Irishman, as he hurried along without pausing or stopping to take breath.

"The little French girl—Rose Michel—caught in the wheel and killed!" repeated Walter Greyson, breathlessly, with a sudden pallor overshadowing his haughty face. "Ah! that accounts for the sudden stoppage of the machinery a few minutes ago; poor girl! poor girl! I hope this is not so bad as that blundering Irishman would have one to suppose."

Thus muttering to himself, with the strange pallor that had settled over his face increasing as he neared the place of the accident, the proprietor of the factory slowly ascended the stairs and was soon inside his nephew's office, bending over the senseless form of the beautiful girl whose face had haunted him since he had seen her in his dream, fleeing through the darkness of the night, pursued by Henry Barton, whose eyes never left her face as she lay before him now, dying, to all appearances.

Minnie Deane knelt beside her, bathing her face and chafing her hands, and weeping softly in her inability to be of any service to her young friend.

Mr. Greyson touched her lightly on the shoulder,

and in a gentler tone than he had spoken to one of his employes, said:

"Go back to your work, child, you can be of no use here—we will do all in our power for her."

Minnie started at the sound of his voice, and with one last lingering look into the blue eyes that gave back no answering glance, passed silently out of the room—as we turn from the coffin of a loved one, with heavy, aching hearts and tearful eyes.

"She was so kind and gentle to me I had learned to love her; and now she, too, like all my dear ones, must be taken from me."

This was the cry that arose from the desolate heart of the lonely little factory girl, as with a look of infinite pain in her soft, gray eyes, she glanced toward the vacant chair so lately occupied by poor Rose, while she resumed her own place with a feeling of unutterable loneliness and desolation.

Scarcely ten minutes had elapsed when Barton's messenger returned with the physician, who, after a careful examination of the nature of the poor girl's injuries, pronounced it a dangerous case, and advised her immediate removal to a hospital where she might be well cared for.

"Let no expense be spared," began Mr. Greyson, stepping forward; but his nephew's hand upon his shoulder caused him to stop abruptly.

"Allow me one moment, if you please, uncle."

Drawing Greyson to one side, he spoke in a tone too low to reach the doctor's ear:

"Pardon my interference, Uncle Walter, but the girl has been injured on my floor, and I claim the right to defray all expenses, and afford her as much help as possible under the circumstances. I may have been harsh with her in the past, considering her youth and the difficulties under which she has labored, and it will ease my conscience in a measure to make what reparation is in my power."

The words were spoken in a tone of well simulated sincerity and affected remorse, and Mr. Greyson never for one moment suspected his nephew's real object in making this very reasonable request. So after a moment's deliberation he replied:

"Well, Harry, since you wish it so, I have no objection to your taking charge of her. I cannot account for the interest I feel in the poor child; but perhaps the resemblance I spoke of has something to do with it. See that good care is taken of her, and if she recovers I will look to it that she is provided for; in the meantime I intend to call into her home and make some provision for the poor old father she spoke of so pitifully."

Henry Barton turned his face away to hide the covert sneer that curled his lips, thinking that he read in the passionate admiration his uncle cast upon the ghastly face of the senseless girl the solution to the mystery of his new-found interest in her.

When Rose had been carried down to the coach that was to convey her to the hospital, Barton paced the narrow limits of his room with a smile of malignant triumph on his dark face, muttering aloud, as was his custom when alone:

"God! how the little jade frightened me. I thought she would have been ground to atoms. It was well Wallace happened to be on hand and managed to stop the machinery so quick. He was as white as a corpse when it was all over, and almost fainted like a woman—bah! how I hate such chicken hearts. My worthy uncle, too, grew almost sick at the sight of her death-like face. He has no suspicion of my designs toward the girl, or he would not so readily consign her to my care. He thinks she will die, but I do not. She has youth on her side, and with careful nursing will battle through. I will win her gratitude if possible. She shall know when she recovers whose money has paid for the comforts and luxuries that shall be provided for her. I will win her by fair means if possible; but if she still continues obstinate the cot in the woods is ready for its occupant. In it once she will soon forget her scruples. But I must keep the matter dark from her gray-haired champion, my respected uncle, who has taken it into his crazy old head to play protector toward her."

The shadows of evening were darkening; the working day was over, and the noise of the whirling wheels and shuttles had ceased, yet, at

sorbed in his own meditations, Barton did not think of this, nor did he see standing in the partly open doorway the figure of a man, who shrank back into the shadow each time he passed to and fro in his rapid pacing, and strained his ears to catch each muttered word.

Archie Wallace, the engineer, seeking Mr. Barton on some errand relating to business matters, had chanced to hear his own name mentioned as he approached the office, and he paused involuntarily on the threshold. He had long suspected Barton of evil intent toward Rose Michel, and the next word he heard spoken convinced him that his instinct had not deceived him. He scarcely breathed, lest he should miss one word of the villain's soliloquy. When at last he turned away, his errand forgotten, there was a look of resolute determination on his face and in the brown depths of his honest eyes.

"Surely Heaven sent me to Barton's office to-night. May the same Heaven help me to save that poor girl from a fate that would be ten-fold worse than the death from which I this day saved her."

The words were spoken softly, with a reverent glance toward the wintry sky, from which the light of day had faded as Archie Wallace treaden his way homeward.

Rose Michel had at least one true friend.

CHAPTER VII.

ONLY A PICTURED FACE.

MR. GREYSON, true to his promise of paying a visit to Rose Michel's father, started from the factory on foot in the direction of the ruined cottage on the hillside.

The journey was a long one to him who so seldom traveled a mile without his comfortable carriage or dainty little sleigh.

It was the close of a day that had been bitterly cold. The first faint rays of the wintry moon lit up the snow-clad earth, and the wind moaned like a creature in distress, through the leafless branches of the trees.

Greyson shuddered, as he hurried along, for his mind was full of the girl who had laid before him an hour or two ago with such white, ghastly face and staring eyes. She was so fair, so delicately formed and so fragile, and yet, day after day, night after night she had traveled this lonely road alone, with scarcely enough clothes upon her to keep the wind from piercing her heart, and often, very often, he feared, with but a scanty breakfast to sustain her. He thought of the injured girl now with a feeling of tenderness for which he was unable to account.

His lost sister, with the sweet, spiritual look on her face that he had noticed in his dream, seemed ever before him.

That face was like, oh, so like, to the pale countenance of Rose Michel. He quickened his pace as he neared her humble home, with a thousand contending emotions in his heart.

He was a stern, cold man, yet he shrank, with an unaccountable feeling of reluctance, from the task before him. How should he face the old man whom Rose had told him was helpless and blind, and tell the story of the dreadful accident that had befallen his darling?

When at last he reached the cot on the bare hillside, and paused for a moment before the low doorway, he could hear the beating of his own heart. He tried to shake off the feeling that oppressed him, but in vain.

"Bah! I am turning coward, I believe; I, who have looked on scenes of bloodshed on a field of battle, shrink from the sight of an old man's agony, a man, too, whom I have never seen, and who may never cross my path again; this tumble-down shanty is as gloomy as a tomb, perhaps that has something to do with the feeling that oppresses me."

Muttering thus, with his hand upon the door-knob, he lingered a moment before entering the home of the girl who only twenty-four hours ago had appealed to him for pity in vain.

His low knock brought no answer, and turning the knob softly he stepped into the room into which the door opened, and called softly the name

of Rose's father; but still there was no response.

"He sleeps well. Ah! me, he will awaken soon enough to the sorrow that awaits him."

The room was in total darkness, and he was obliged to strike a match he chanced to have in his vest pocket, in order to see where he stood. By its feeble rays he discovered a piece of candle on the low mantel shelf, and lighting this he looked wonderingly around the miserable apartment.

One glance toward the low cot bed in the corner revealed the old man, lying with face turned to the wall, sleeping quietly; very quietly, he thought, for he could not hear the sound of his breathing.

The whitened ashes of the dead fire were strewn over the hearth, and the cup of cold tea and piece of untouched toast on the chair showed the pitiful attempts of poor Rose to render him comfortable.

The bare boards of the floor were scrubbed white as snow, and the scanty clothing upon the bed, though old and much worn, was scrupulously clean.

Walter Greyson sank down upon one of the wooden chairs with a feeling in his heart that had long been a stranger there.

"Poor girl! poor little one! how hard has been her lot. My God, how heartless and cruel I have been; she appealed to me with truth in her innocent face, and in the very accent of her gentle voice, but having been imposed upon so often, I disbelieved her. Curses on my stupidity, why could I not distinguish the ring of true gold from the jingle of false metal; it is ever thus; the few who are innocent must suffer for the many who are guilty."

Musing thus, the rich man sat until the death-like silence reigning around him became intolerable.

The little clock on the mantel had long ago run down, the old man still slept so quietly and breathlessly, and only the sighing of the wintry wind down the great yawning chimney disturbed the vault-like silence.

"This will not do; I must awaken him. May God give him strength to bear the blow that awaits him."

Walter Greyson started at the sound of his own voice—for he had involuntarily spoken aloud—for years no prayer had passed his lips, and he could scarcely credit the evidence of his own senses when he realized that he had now uttered one.

His hand fell softly on the shoulder of the white-haired man, who lay so motionless and silent before him, and his voice was gentle as a woman's when he bent over him, calling softly:

"Michel! Michel! awake. A friend would speak with you."

He shook the old man's shoulder as he spoke, but still there came no answer to his call.

He drew the white head round upon the pillow, and bending closer, looked down into the sightless depths of the wide open brown eyes.

An expression of horror settled slowly over his dark face, and he flung his hands before his face with a cry that awoke the echoes of the silent place, though it could not awaken the unconscious sleeper lying so white and cold before him.

"My God! I am too late. He has died uncared for and alone."

Julian Michel was indeed beyond the reach of earthly care. He had been dead nearly ten hours when Walter Greyson discovered the fact.

Never more would the poor heart be wrung with fears for his darling's future. Never again would the sound of her voice, husky with the tears she strove so well to hide, wring that poor breast and call the bitter drops of anguished woe from those wistful, sightless eyes.

When the first shock was over and he could bring himself to face the truth, Walter Greyson looked long and earnestly into the marble face. There was a strange attraction in that face for him. The features were massive, and upon them was stamped a certain grandeur that it puzzled him to give a name to. Julian Michel must have been an uncommonly handsome man in his youth, for every lineament was strangely perfect, and

even the ravages of age, poverty and woe had failed to rob him of that singular beauty of face and form.

While Greyson gazed lingeringly upon him the glitter of something bright in the hand pressed closely against the pulseless heart caught his eye. He held the candle nearer to the stiffened hand, and saw within the shine of gold. With a feeling of curiosity for which he could not account he determined to discover what the object was that the dead man guarded so jealously.

He laid the candle out of his hand, and drew from between the clenched fingers of the dead man a tiny golden locket attached to a black ribbon. It was a dainty little affair, and turning it over in his hand Walter Greyson saw with a feeling of inexpressible wonder that it was studded with diamonds, and on turning it to the light found that the jewels formed the letter L.

"Good God! I have seen this before," he cried, in a hoarse voice, trembling so violently that the locket fell from his hand upon the boarded floor.

It flew open with the force of the fall, and picking it hastily up, he gave it one long, intense glance. It was only a pictured face upon which he gazed, a pair of great, blue, wistful eyes that met his own; but Walter Greyson's face grew ghastly pale, and throwing himself down upon the bare floor, he sobbed aloud in the anguish of some terrible grief.

CHAPTER VIII.

A VOICE FROM THE GRAVE.

FOR half an hour Mr. Greyson walked up and down the narrow limits of the death-chamber, with the little jewel-studded locket clinched in his hand.

What memories had the face it held to move him thus?

He held it before the light and looked closely at it from time to time as if striving to find something that puzzled him.

"Why should I think it is the same? and yet, and yet, oh, God! I cannot be mistaken! It is her face, I would know it among thousands, these tender, panting lips, the slender, swan-like throat, the arching brow and saucy, witching eye. Yet how came it here? If it is the one I gave her, there is a hidden spring somewhere, and a little aperture where she used to keep a lock of my hair in the old happy days, ere another love grew into her heart."

Murmuring thus, he turned the locket over and over in his hand, searching diligently for the spring he alluded to. But for a long time it baffled all his efforts, and at last he was about to give up the attempt in despair, when something snapped, the hidden aperture was revealed to his gaze.

With a hushed, breathless look on his face, he drew from it a little scrap of paper, as fine as a cobweb, written on both sides, in characters so minute that the naked eye could with difficulty decipher them.

He could hear the muffled throbbing of his own heart, as, mindless of the silent dead, whose sightless eyes seemed to be fixed upon him, he sat down upon one of the wooden chairs, and spreading out under the tallow candle the scrap of paper he had obtained so strangely, began to read it carefully, spelling out each finely written word with unwearying patience.

It was written in French, and read as follows:

"To my dearly beloved husband, Julian Michel, Count De Lorme:—Julian, on this, the eve of our departure from your native land and the home where our little one was born, and where we had lived so happy, my mind is filled with strange forebodings. I know we are going out into poverty and exile, but this alone would not daunt me while your love was left me and our child was by our side."

"The terror of separation grows on me hour by hour. My failing health may have something to do with this unaccountable feeling, but whatever its cause I cannot banish it; and must tell you the thoughts it has awakened. My beloved Julian, you have been a loving and devoted husband, and whatever the future holds in store I will never

regret my union with you. We are going out to face the bitter world almost penniless—we who have been reared in luxury—and poverty will be galling to your proud heart. I will not be long with you, my darling, to share your burden or lighten your sorrow. We must face the truth boldly or the coming parting will be harder to bear. When God calls me from you, my child, *our* child, dear Julian, will need all your loving care. I need not implore you to guard her well and guide her tender feet in the true path, for I know your heart, my darling; I know that while you live your child will never be neglected, but oh! my love! my love! forgive me for making you face the terrible possibility; but if you too should sink beneath your load of sorrow, if you should die while she is still unable to provide for herself, what would become of her, my little Rose! my precious child! Julian, the words I am about to write will be as the dying request of her who has loved you long and faithfully.

"I know how proud you are, I know that you would die a hundred deaths rather than apply for help to any human being; but, for your little one's sake, should your summons come ere she has reached the age of womanhood, you must sacrifice your pride for the happiness of that child. When you fell from your high estate, and lost the immense fortune that had made you careless of my people's anger, you made me swear, by my love for you, never to reveal my whereabouts to any of them, never to give them an opportunity of exulting in our downfall. I will keep my vow faithfully, to the end. There is but one on earth now, related to me by the tie of blood, my brother, my darling brother, whose dear face lives in my heart. Should my child go to him, orphaned and poor, he would love her dearly, for my sake he would rear her tenderly as I was reared. And now, my dearest, my proud, noble husband, I would speak to you, as I would on my death-bed.

"Send Rose to Walter Greyson, should death call you from her ere she has reached her twenty-first year. Keep the locket, in which I enclose this, whatever need you may have for the money its sale might bring, give it to Rose when you are dying, let her present it to Walter, he will recognize it, it was his gift, it will be her passport to his heart.

"He knows the secret of the hidden spring, he will find therein his sister's dying words. My darling Julian, God may spare me to you longer than I have dared to hope, it may be years ere these words will meet your eye; but I will never alter them till on my bed of death I place them in your hand. My husband! My love! the memory of what that hour may bring you has called the hot tears to my eyes, I can scarcely see to sign myself your loving wife, LAURA."

The last words were scarcely legible, being all blotted and tear-stained, but Walter Greyson read them over and over, till every letter seemed graven on his heart. It had been written in Paris, France, and bore the date of ten years previous to the opening of our story.

Over and over again, the pale, haughty-faced man pressed the little missive that had come to him so strangely, to his lips, as if it were the little hand that had written it, the little hand now crumbling to dust in the grave; while tears, the first he had shed since his boyhood, rained down his white cheeks.

"My beautiful sister, my little sunny-haired Laura, your words have come to me like a voice from the grave, my blue-eyed darling! Heaven must have directed my steps to-night: had I obeyed the first impulse of my heart, I would have sent a servant in my place, to relieve the wants of the old man who was only the father of one of my working-girls. My dream is realized; you, my Laura, from your home on high came to me in my dreams; the guardian angel who protected the little factory girl was indeed thy sweet spirit, my lost sister. Oh, God! that thy child should have appealed to me in vain; that I should offer charity to one in whose veins thy heart's blood ran."

He paced the floor again and again, suffering all the agonies of remorse, never once casting his eyes in the direction of the humble cot on which

lay all that was mortal of him whom the sister he had loved so dearly cherished above all earthly beings.

The gray dawn of another day stole on him unawares, and the feeble light entering through the unshuttered windows, aroused him to a full sense of his surroundings. For the first time since he had read the contents of the hidden letter, he glanced toward the death-bed. In an instant he was bending over its silent occupant, with one icy hand clasped in his own.

"So this is all that remains of Julian, Count De Lorme. Would that I had known him sooner. I cannot curse the pride that tempered him to starve rather than ask for charity, for the same feeling would have gone to the grave with me, had I been in his place. Poor heart! poor proud heart! it must have been bitter indeed, the struggle you have endured, ere you snapped beneath the cruel strain; it is over now, poor heart, it is all forgotten."

For a moment Walter Greyson's tears fell like rain upon the hand that had never met his own in life, then laying it gently back upon the pulseless breast, moved slowly from the bedside. As he did so his eyes fell upon the wooden chair, with its poor, untasted meal—cold tea and dried toast—and remembering whose loving hands had placed it there, he turned again toward the silent sleeper.

"For her sake, Julian Michel, you shall be buried as becomes the last member of the ancient name you bear."

Then, with one last look into the dead face, noble despite the poverty of its surroundings, fearless and proud despite its sufferings, he hurried from the humble cottage, careless of the biting cold and piercing winds, unconscious of his own fatigue, and forgetting that the night had been passed in wakefulness.

The memories of years that were dead filled heart and brain, he had no thought for the present, he was walking in enchanted ground, present and future alike forgotten; the past only, with its joys and trials, real, terribly real.

CHAPTER IX.

MORE TREACHERY.

WALTER GREYSON, after leaving the scene of poverty and death, that had filled his heart with such a host of contending emotions, walked briskly for over half an hour, until at last he paused before a tall brick house, over the door of which hung a gilded sign, bearing the following:

"GEORGE H. BLACK,
SEXTON AND UNDERTAKER."

"This is the house I seek," he exclaimed, pulling the bell cord in a hasty, imperious manner.

His summons was answered quickly by a frowsy-headed servant maid, who managed with great difficulty to keep her eyes open while she listened to his message.

"Tell Mr. Black I wish to see him immediately, hand him this card," he commanded, and the girl shuffled away through the hall, to reappear in a moment and usher the stranger into the little parlor, where her master soon joined him.

For nearly an hour the undertaker was closeted with him, and the eastern sky was crimsoned with the light of the rising sun when at last he started on his way homeward.

The snow was frozen hard under his feet, and a heavy rain having fallen just before daybreak, had rendered the road extremely difficult for travel.

Unmindful of this he hurried along, with the face of his dead sister's child, as he had seen it last, ever before him.

He had thrust the little golden locket, with its sweet pictured face, carelessly in his vest pocket, with the little missive that had told the story of its original wrapped around it.

Several times, in the dim light of the young day, he took it out, looked at it, long and earnestly; studying the words as if they were not stamped on his brain, never to be forgotten, till death should blot out the memory of every earthly joy and sorrow.

He was only a few squares distant from his

home, and nearer still to the residence of his nephew, Henry Barton, when his two feet slipped from under him, and he fell heavily backward on the icy walk, striking his head with terrible force on the granite carriage block before the door of one of the aristocratic dwellings he was passing. Early as was the hour, a crowd gathered round him in a few moments, and one of the by-standers, pushing his way through their midst, bent over the fallen man for a moment, then raising a pale, horrified face to theirs, cried out:

"I recognize this gentleman, I am an engineer in his factory, his name is Walter Greyson; lend me a hand, kind friends, we will carry him home; it is not far distant; I fear he is very seriously injured."

A dozen hands were ready to give Archie Wallace the assistance he required, and in less than five minutes Walter Greyson lay bleeding and senseless on the bed from which it was doubtful whether he would ever rise, while Wallace, after sending a physician to him hurried to the home of Henry Barton, to acquaint him with the accident that had befallen his uncle.

Barton lost no time in reaching the home of his injured relative, where he found everything in confusion; servants running to and fro, tripping each other in their haste to do something for their master, and—as is generally the case in a bachelor's household where there is no mistress to superintend the domestic arrangements—accomplishing nothing, but making confusion in the end.

Barton gave his orders with an air of one accustomed to command, and the house was soon quiet as a tomb.

The doctor was with his uncle when he entered his room, and shook his wise head doubtfully when asked his opinion.

"His skull is badly fractured, my dear sir, I dare not bid you hope," he whispered, pressing Henry's hand in silent sympathy.

He turned very impatiently, angered by the questioning look in the doctor's eyes, and drummed idly on the window pane, while the servant, Paul, Walter Greyson's personal attendant, removed his master's clothing.

When the doctor had left the room for a moment, he turned his eyes toward the bed again, just in time to see something fall from the pocket of the vest thrown across Paul's arm.

Unnoticed by the servant he stooped, and picked it up; it was the tiny locket, with the initial L, in glittering diamonds, set in so skilfully.

In an instant he had thrust it out of sight, and was bending over his relative, with many expressions of anxiety and sorrow.

The physician entering, found him thus, and thought: "I have been mistaken. He is truly sorry; and I imagined I saw a look of triumph on his face when I told him my opinion of his uncle's case. Well, we are all liable to mistakes sometimes."

Henry Barton soon found an excuse for withdrawing from the scene.

The factory bell rang, and he was obliged to be at his post. He ordered one of the servants to prepare the carriage, and was soon rolling rapidly over the road, on his way to the factory. Arriving there he attended to the business that demanded his immediate attention, answered the numerous questions relative to his uncle's state, for the news of the accident had spread rapidly—calmly as possible, and a look of hypocritical sorrow on his face; when, as if to be alone with his grief, locked himself in his private office, and threw himself into an easy chair with a sigh of relief.

"Now I can examine this pretty trinket at my leisure," he muttered, and taking the little jeweled toy from his pocket he examined it closely. At first he was about to throw the scrap of paper that was wrapped around it away as something of no value, but as he was in the act of doing so one word caught his eye, the name "Rose."

He began to scan the paper eagerly, a look of rapt attention gathered upon his face as he took in the full meaning of the words written thereon. He was an apt French scholar, and the task was no difficult one, although the paper was soiled and torn, and age-worn.

When he had mastered its contents he began

pacing the floor in his old restless manner, his face working with a thousand contending emotions.

Over and over again he read the paper he held so tightly in his hand, as his uncle had done a few hours before.

Now and then a low laugh would issue from his parted lips, a laugh of mingled scorn and triumph.

"Fate seems to favor me," he muttered at last, "this girl was doomed to cross my path. Walton Greyson would make her his heiress should he recover, and I would be left almost penniless; Clarice's fortune has dwindled away, and every cent of my fortune has followed it, both lost at the accursed gambling table; I have depended on the money that would be mine as my uncle's heir, but now that this new found niece claims his care, I and my child will come to the wall. God above, I would cut her white throat from ear to ear rather than see her in my daughter's place. She shall be removed at once to the cot in the woods; I will make her my wife by fair means or foul, and then he can make her his heiress if he will. The doctor thinks he will die. Bah! I have seen him low enough before to-day, he will recover, though if my prayers would hasten his end he would not pass the night that is coming. This, then, is the secret of Rose Michel's wonderful resemblance to the sister of whom he prates continually. I will have to play my cards well should he indeed recover, for he would move heaven and earth to find her, since he knows what claim she has upon him."

A knock upon the door of his office interrupted him and he opened it, after hastily concealing the locket, and the paper that belonged with it.

Minnie Deane was the intruder. The poor girl had been unable to obtain any information of her injured friend from any other source, and ventured into the presence of the haughty, imperious man before her, with fear and trembling.

"Mr. Barton! please pardon me, but I have slept none during the night, I was so anxious to know her fate! is she likely to live? Will I see her again?" she faltered, dropping her eyes before his steady gaze.

He was about to give her an impatient answer, but something in her face deterred him, and with a sigh that seemed to come from his heart, he answered:

"My girl! I can give you no hope as yet, your little friend is very low, and only God can raise her. Go to your work now, I will let you know when there is any change, I can do no more."

Minnie bowed, and left him, just as Harper, his servant and tool, entered the room.

"Ah! Harper! I have work for you at once; lock the door, and listen well to my instructions," Barton exclaimed, glancing around him, as if the very walls had ears.

CHAPTER X.

THE DOCTOR'S VISITOR.

HARPER smiled significantly, and shot the bolt as he entered the office door, knowing well by the expression of Barton's face, and the tone of his voice, that the business on which he desired to speak was strictly private. For nearly an hour they conversed in whispers, and when at last they emerged from the factory, Barton turned his face towards his uncle's residence, while Harper started off at a brisk pace in an entirely different direction.

In the meanwhile Rose Michel, still utterly unconscious, lay on the little white bed provided for her in the private hospital to which she had been taken after the accident.

Henry Barton had given orders that no expense should be spared, and everything that could be done for her comfort was done in accordance.

At first the doctors agreed in the belief that she could never recover, but as the hours wore on, and despite the lethargy in which her senses were steeped, she breathed more regularly, and a tinge of faintest red crept into the death-like face, they changed their verdict, and whispered among themselves:

"The girl will surely live."

The sun was scarce an hour high, when, on the second morning after the accident, a nurse an-

nounced a gentleman in the parlor to see Dr. Walworth, the head physician.

He was standing by Rose's bedside when the message came to him, but he dropped his patient's hand at once, and descended to the room where the visitor awaited him.

"You desired to speak with Dr. Walworth, I understand. Well, sir, I am at your service, what can I do for you?" the doctor asked in an easy, professional tone, glancing inquiringly in to the visitor's face.

The visitor came forward at sound of his voice, a tall, thin, sallow-faced individual, with bushy red hair and beard, and small ferret eyes, that never left the doctor's face while he addressed him.

He was attired in the finest of black broadcloth, and diamond studs glittered and flashed forth every hue of the rainbow, from his immaculate shirt front.

He came toward Doctor Walworth with an expression of sadness on his bearded face, and his words were spoken almost in a whisper as he addressed him.

"Doctor Walworth, I understand that you are the manager of this hospital, and I have therefore come to you to speak of a patient whom you are attending, a young girl who was caught in the machinery of Greyson's factory, where she was employed two days ago. She is my brother's child, and although I have been separated from my family nearly ten years I cannot see one who bears my name lying in an hospital while I have untold wealth and none to share it. I have brought a comfortable traveling carriage to the door, furnished with every comfort for a person in her condition, and if you will have her conveyed to it, I will defray all the expenses she has incurred since placed under your care."

Doctor Walworth shook his head while the gentleman was talking, and at the conclusion of his speech said decidedly:

"My dear sir, I am sorry to refuse your request, but what you ask is simply impossible. The girl you allude to was placed in my care by Mr. Henry Barton, a member of the firm of Greyson & Co., where she was employed at the time of the accident. He pays all her expenses and I am answerable to him for her treatment. I am sorry I cannot oblige you, but to accede to your request is simply out of the question."

The doctor's visitor turned away his face for a moment to hide the covert sneer that curled his lips, and the doctor continued:

"Is there nothing else I can do for you, sir? Do you wish to see your niece?"

"I wish to take her with me from this place, Dr. Walworth; read this, and perhaps you will offer no more objections."

The stranger drew from his pocket a sealed envelope as he spoke and the doctor drew from it a note which read as follows:

"DR. WALWORTH: The bearer of this, Pierre Michel, has my permission to remove the girl, Rose Michel, from your protection, whenever it pleases him to do so. I will not hold myself responsible for any debts contracted by her after the present date. Signed, HENRY BARTON."

After reading the above, Dr. Walworth hesitated no longer.

The stranger placed a couple of crisp greenbacks in his hand, and without further words he gave orders for Rose Michel to be carried down to the traveling coach that stood before the back entrance.

The poor girl was weak as an infant, her great blue wistful eyes wandered over the faces of her attendants with no light of reason in their pain-dimmed depths, and once or twice a groan of anguish burst from her pallid lips, as her bandaged limbs were shaken and jarred in carrying her down the winding stairs.

When at last they placed her comfortably as possible in the traveling carriage, on the pillows that had been provided for her, she sank into a deep and deathlike swoon, and Dr. Walworth shook his head, as he met her new found relative's eyes fixed upon him with an eager inquiring look.

"A bad sign, a very bad sign, my friend. I fear you have signed her death warrant by removing

her in her present weak state. It would have been wiser to have left her with us yet a little longer." But the stranger did not express much anxiety on the subject; he entered the coach with a careless gesture of farewell, and seated himself in a corner, where he could watch the pallid face opposite him, without moving out of the comfortable position he occupied. He broke out into a low laugh of triumph when at last the coach rolled away from the hospital gates, and gazing fixedly into the countenance of his silent companion murmured:

"Dead or alive, it is all the same to me, I have accomplished my mission. You, at least will tell no tales, and as for him, I have him now in my power, I know the secret he would guard so carefully, my little lady, I know why he would risk so much for your sake. He must learn to break himself of the habit of speaking aloud, if he would conceal his intentions from so sharp a foe as he has made for himself, by his overbearing demeanor towards me. Pshaw! how I hate such transparent villainy. He has not smartness enough to cover his tracks when he desires to commit what the world calls crime. I hate him more and more every hour, and when the time comes for me to denounce him, and speak the words that will hurl him from the proud position he now occupies, I will be happy, happy in his downfall. The death of Walter Greyson would destroy all my hopes, but he is improving, they say, and there is as yet no cause for fear."

With these words, uttered in a tone of satisfaction the soi-distant uncle of Rose Michel settled himself comfortably in his corner, and was soon sleeping soundly, while the coach bowed slowly over the lonely country-road, and no word or sign came from the parted lips of the poor factory girl, lying so white and still upon the pillow before him.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ENGINEER.

Lost to earth's pains and its sorrow

Lost but to know in that holier sphere

The balm that prevails in that pearl-border'd city

The blessings that soothe not waiting ones here;

Oh! blessed is the slumber whose silence is dreamless

And sweet the awaking that cometh at last,

Far 'yond the gates that, eternally gleaming,

Lead to a land where all anguish is past.

Early on the evening of the day on which their master was brought home senseless and almost dying, Walter Greyson's servants were started from their occupations by the loud ringing of the door bell. Paul, Mr. Greyson's personal attendant, was, as it happened, passing through the hall on his way to his master's chamber, and paused to open the door. A covered wagon was drawn up before the entrance, from which a tall, grave-faced man sprang lightly, and accosted the servant in easy nonchalant tones.

"My man! inform your master that the remains have arrived, hand him this card."

"The remains! the remains!" Paul repeated in bewilderment, gazing blankly upon the piece of paste-board in his hand and reading over and over again, as though he failed to understand them; the words, "George H. Black, Sexton and Undertaker."

"But! but—Mr. Black, surely there is some mistake here; my master, Mr. Walter Greyson, is dying we fear, he cannot answer for himself, but I know he expects no such thing as that," Paul exclaimed, with a slight shudder, and a wave of his hand toward the wagon with its mysterious contents.

The undertaker's reply was interrupted by the appearance of a third party on the scene in the person of Henry Barton, who had hastened hither after his protracted interview with his servant, Harper, in the office of the factory. A sudden pallor overspread his dark, impassive face, as he recognized the man who stood upon his uncle's steps and he staggered like one who had been struck by a sudden blow. Only for a moment did he betray these signs of emotion. Paul watching him with eyes full of distrust and suspicion, saw an unmistakable smile of triumph hover for a moment round the full, sensual lips, and under his breath muttered the word "Hypo-

write" when Henry Barton with an air of pretended horror, caught the undertaker's arm and cried in a husky voice:

"My God! why are you here? he is not dead! My poor uncle! so soon!"

Paul's muttered ejaculation reached his sharp ears, and his pale face flushed hotly.

"You are right, Mr. Barton, your respected relative is not dead, to my knowledge; I am here by his own orders, and have in my charge the remains of an old gentleman who was his friend, I believe. He died in reduced circumstances, and your uncle intended to have his remains interred with every honor. I had heard nothing of his own illness, until his servant here informed me of the sad fact. I suppose you will attend to the interment in your uncle's place, will you not, Mr. Barton?"

Quick as a flash the truth entered Barton's brain. It was Rose Michel's father, the new-found brother-in-law whom his uncle intended to bury with so much honor.

Mentally grinding his teeth with rage, Barton answered in a tone of affected sincerity:

"Certainly, certainly, Mr. Black, I will see that my uncle's instructions are carried out to the very letter. Have you full directions for the carrying out of the funeral?"

Mr. Black bowed in the affirmative, and the doors were thrown open to admit the silent guest who never in life had entered them.

While poor Rose Michel lay senseless and utterly unconscious of her bereavement, a costly rosewood casket rested on velvet-covered trestles, in the darkened parlor of Walter Greyson's elegant mansion.

Crowds of people attracted by the crape on the bell-handle, visited the house, thinking that it was Walter Greyson himself who had been called away.

Many of them passed with awe and wonder round the mysterious casket, and glanced curiously at the heavy silver plate, upon it simply the words:

"JULIAN MICHEL D'ORME."

This was all; no date of birth, or death, but simply the name by which he had been known.

Henry Barton was in attendance, constantly hovering between the parlor and the chamber above, where his uncle lay, still utterly unconscious, but improving slowly, the doctors affirmed.

To all who made inquiries concerning the dead man, he gave the invariable answer:

"Monsieur D'Orme was a most intimate friend of my uncle's. He died suddenly, and in exile, and my generous and noble-hearted relative wished every respect paid to his remains."

The answer was vague, and left room for much conjecture, and many a curious eye looked long and earnestly into the grand, massive features, so strangely handsome in their peaceful repose, despite the world-weary look that even death could not wholly efface.

But up to the hour set apart for the funeral none had recognized in the dead man lying in state, in Walter Greyson's parlor, the late occupant of the ruined cottage on the hillside.

The coffin-lid was about to be screwed down, when a man, poorer clad than any who had yet viewed the corpse, stooped down and gave one long look into the marble face, and then started back with a suppressed cry of astonishment.

"My God! 'tis her father! What can this mean?" he was heard to utter, turning away from the coffin with a look of perfect bewilderment on his fair, frank face.

He was a man of about thirty or thereabouts, tall and broad-shouldered, with the beauty and grace of an Apollo-Belvidere, and also the strength of a Hercules.

Henry Barton glanced at him with a supercilious smile, inwardly exclaiming:

"Curse this Archie Wallace! he is always turning up when least wanted and least expected. There is a dangerous look in his eyes, and sometimes I think they threaten me. He suspects me, and I must be on my guard."

The light touch of a hand upon his shoulder broke in upon his meditation, and looking up with

a start he recognized the man of whom he had been thinking, Archie Wallace. There was a strange, intense light in the young engineer's large hazel eyes, and Barton grew uneasy beneath their steady gaze.

"Pardon me, Mr. Barton, if I ask an impertinent question, but will you tell me how Rose Michel's father chanced to die here?"

There was a tone of command in the deep, rich voice that grated on Barton's ear, and taking a step backward, he answered haughtily:

"Archie Wallace, what authority have you to employ this tone to me? You are indeed impertinent, and I do not recognize your right to question me."

He turned on his heel as he spoke, and would have walked away, but Wallace's hand again detained him, and the engineer spoke:

"Henry Barton, I demand an answer to another question. Here, in the presence of her dead father, I ask you where have you hidden Rose Michel? I claim a right to the answer—the right of a true man to protect the helpless and innocent."

Taken entirely by surprise, the villain's face grew fairly livid, and he dropped his eyes again beneath Wallace's intense gaze.

In a moment he recovered himself, and attempted to hide his discomfiture under a mask of scornful bravado:

"Upon my word your assurance surpasses anything I have ever met. You come to me to find out where your sweetheart was, did you? Well, in pity for the weakness which has rendered you unaccountable for your actions, I will inform you that to the best of my knowledge she is in the Lowell Hospital, where you may visit her in proper hours. At some other time and place I will hold a conversation with you."

He tried to look easy and unconcerned, but his restless, shifting eyes, and pallid face, gave the lie to his manner.

Wallace was not in the least deceived. He had visited the hospital, and knew that Rose was no longer within its walls; he remembered Barton's words, "the cot in the woods will be ready for its occupant," and knew that they boded ill to sweet Rose Michel.

His first impulse was to let Barton know how much he suspected, but on second thought he knew that this would not be the wisest course—it must be diamond cut diamond between them; he must use strategy for strategy.

He raised his head quickly, and looking straight into Barton's face, said in a low, significant tone:

"Perhaps I have been mistaken, Mr. Barton, but the poor girl has been removed from the institution, and I thought you would be the one most likely to know of her whereabouts. I am sorry if I have offended you; good-day."

He bowed with the grace of a courtier rather than the rude action of a workingman, and passed down the stoop of the mansion just as the casket was borne down to the black-plumed hearse in waiting.

Archie Wallace strode away in an opposite direction with a strangely perplexed look on his face, and his heart in a whirl of conflicting emotions.

"I will lose my place by it, but thanks to my rigid rules of economy, I have a few dollars laid aside for a rainy day, and will not let the fear of losing employment deter me from the mission upon which I have set my heart. I must rescue Rose Michel from that villain's power. She is so utterly destitute and friendless, I must find her hiding place—and then—and then—oh, my darling, my sweet white rose! my little innocent Rose! I may dare to offer you the shelter of my poor home, and the love of a heart that has known no other image, that has known no other love. She was so beautiful, so far above her station, I dared not offer her my home's poor shelter, but now, when ill, dying perhaps, in the power of a libertine, friendless, homeless, penniless, I find her. I will hesitate no longer. My darling, my little broken-winged birdie."

CHAPTER XII.

THE COT IN THE WOODS.

SITUATED in the heart of a dense woodland, al-

most hidden by the giant trees that overshadowed it and swept its roof with its leafless branches, stood the little cottage of which Henry Barton was the owner. There was not another habitation within a mile's distance, and a more solitary, dreary-looking spot could not have been found in the state.

The cottage had originally been erected by a gentleman whose wife was insane, and within its gloomy walls the unfortunate lady had spent the last days of her wretched life.

What had possessed Henry Barton to purchase it, he could not himself have explained, for he had not visited the place in years.

Obedient to his orders, his servant Harper had fitted up two upper rooms in an incredibly short space of time.

The floors were neatly carpeted, the furniture plain, but of rich material, and a couple of canary birds hung in gilded cages in the windows.

A tall, slender-built woman, whose ruddy cheeks and sprightly air belied her ripe old age, was flitting restlessly from room to room, on the day of which we write.

Every few moments she would stand outside the low hall door, shading her eyes with her hand, as if to protect them from the sunlight that never penetrated the dense foliage that shadowed her home.

All at once the sound of carriage wheels was heard winding a tortuous way through the dried leaves, and the woman's face lit up with a look of eager expectancy, while she smoothed her calico apron, and arranged her snowy kerchief.

The carriage drew nearer and nearer, and at last stopped before her door. She ran down the narrow clearing, and welcomed with open arms the individual who alighted from it, the very same person who had introduced himself at the Lowell hospital as Rose Michel's uncle.

He kissed the woman tenderly, and drew off his false red wig and beard, as with her clinging arms clasped close about him she whispered:

"Take off that nasty disguise, my boy; you have no need to fear discovery here."

Harper—for it was he—threw the false articles mentioned into his mother's lap, and lifting from the lumbering traveling carriage the inanimate form of Rose Michel, bore it into the room so lately prepared for her reception.

His mother followed, and with her he left the suffering girl while he sauntered back into the little kitchen on the ground floor through which they were obliged to pass in order to reach the bedrooms.

Rose had not as yet recovered consciousness; she had received such a sudden shock that her whole system suffered from its effects, and when the woman left her she lay back upon the little snow-white bed, white as the clothing that surrounded her sweet-pale face. The woman joined her son on the lower floor, and left Rose to sleep off her fatigue.

The carriage was immediately dismissed, and Harper and his mother found themselves alone. They conversed together for hours, in whispers, as if fearful that the very trees, moaning and shrieking in the windy blast outside the narrow windows would harken to their words.

At last the son arose to go, and not all the woman's persuasions could induce him to remain a moment longer. Donning his heavy great coat and his red wig and whiskers he bade her a hasty farewell, pausing at the door to whisper in her ear:

"Remember, mother, you are to guard her well. Were she to escape she would surely betray us. Think of the wealth that may be ours in the future, and keep up a brave heart."

Then, with a hasty kiss upon her lips, he hurried away, and she was alone in the cottage—alone, save for the girl who lay so still and white in the pretty white-draped chamber above.

When her son's tall form had disappeared from view she ascended the narrow staircase once more, and in a few moments stood by Rose's bedside. In the short time that had elapsed since she saw her, a visible change had taken place. The breathing now was plainly audible, and the faintest tinge of pink had crept into the pallid cheeks.

"This girl will live—poor little wretch! she had better die a thousand deaths than live for the fate that will be hers," she muttered, and as if in answer to her words, Rose opened her great blue eyes slowly and looked into her face.

Something in the expression of the azure orbs seemed to touch the woman's heart; for one brief second she held the girl's wasted hand tightly in her own, and bending over her, whispered:

"Poor child, poor little one, what can I do for you?"

"Water," the pale lips faltered, and hastily filling a glass from the water pitcher Mrs. Harper held it to her lips.

She drank thirstily, and the draught seemed to revive her, for the deep blue eyes sought the woman's face imploringly, as if she would find the question she was too weak to utter.

Mrs. Harper shunned the piteous gaze and busied herself about the room, more moved than she would have confessed to herself by the innocent beauty of the little factory girl.

She left the apartments presently, to return with some nourishing beef tea in about half an hour's time.

Rose was still awake, and although she was weak as an infant, Mrs. Harper fed her with the tea, and laid her back upon her pillow, much refreshed.

She fell into a deep sleep after this scanty meal, and awakened fully conscious.

The woman who was her servant and jailer sat beside her dozing, and Rose's feeble voice startled her so that she sprang from her chair in alarm, forgetting for the moment that she was not alone.

"Where am I? My father! Oh, where is he?" the poor child faltered, trying to raise herself on her pillow, but falling back with a cry of pain, as the action disturbed her bruised and swollen feet.

"Hush, child! You must not attempt to speak or move. You are safe, no harm shall befall you; you have been injured and the least exertion may prove fatal."

Rose seemed scarcely to understand the woman's words.

She looked around her vaguely, taking in every object by which she was surrounded, and trying to collect her scattered thoughts.

At last a full realization of the truth seemed to dawn upon her. She remembered her interview with Henry Barton. Her sudden weakness, and Minnie Deane's warning cry; after that all was a blank, until she awakened in the room around which she gazed so wonderingly.

"To whom does this house belong? Oh, madam, dear madam, do not keep me in suspense. My poor blind father, my dying father is all alone at home, and I have been injured, caught in the wheel. Who has attended him? how long have I been ill?"

The woman seemed at a loss for words to answer her eager questions.

The girl was fearfully excited. She had sprang up in the bed, never heeding the fierce throbbing pain that shot through every fiber of her being.

She was white as the snow-drifts on the bare hillside near her far away home, and her great blue eyes sought the woman's face with such a piteous, appealing gaze that a heart of stone might have pitied her. Mrs. Harper paced the floor two or three times, debating the answer it was best to give her. At last she formed a resolution.

"Poor child," she murmured. "Tis best she know the worst at once, if it kill her, I will not be blamed, and it will be better so. Burton knows I have been a sick nurse all my life, it is to my interest to serve him well. He will not doubt that I have done so, and I will not lose my reward; poor little one! poor, innocent! I would rather see you dead than resign you to him."

With these thoughts in her heart, Mrs. Harper approached Rose, and taking the girl's fragile form to her breast, turned away her eyes while she replied:

"Little girl, your poor father is dead; your employer, Mr. Greyson, attends to his burial, and Mr. Barton, in whose house you are at present, will provide for your wants in the future."

For a moment the girl did not seem to realize the full meaning of the words, then a cry broke

from her and she sank back, like one dead, upon the feather pillow, and Mrs. Harper, placing her hand upon the tortured heart, felt no motion there.

CHAPTER XIII

SHADOWED.

THE funeral of Julian Michel was largely attended, notwithstanding the fact that he was unknown to any of the fashionable circle who had followed him to the grave. He was the wealthy Walter Greyson's friend, and that was passport enough to general favor.

Henry Barton attended as chief-mourner, and although he had never met the deceased in life, carried a grave face and a silent, subdued manner.

His uncle was improving, the doctors had affirmed, when he left his bedside that afternoon, and in his heart he cursed them for the unwelcome tidings.

During his absence the two head physicians held a consultation in the library, and on his return from the cemetery they met him, with grave faces and ominous looks, and taking him aside informed him, with many attempts at consolation, that his respected and highly honored uncle could not possibly recover his reason.

Health and strength might be restored to him, he would never be violently insane, but his brain was crushed in, and they could not fully restore his mind. A gleam of exultation lit up the dark face of Barton, and his heart beat high with hope.

Walter Greyson had made a will six months before, in his favor, and even should he recover sufficiently to dictate another in favor of Rose Michel, it would not be legal since he had been pronounced unsound of mind.

He listened to the doctors' verdict with many expressions of regret and sorrow, for he had no idea of throwing off his mask before them.

He left them, with grave pale face, and stole quietly to his uncle's bedside.

The old man lay back upon his pillow, white as the snowy linen about him.

His eyes were open, and when Henry bent over him he looked up into his face and smiled. Such a sad smile, and there was no gleam of recognition in the great mournful eyes. He had loved and cared for this nephew all his life, he had given him a college education when his parents died and left him almost penniless. He had taken him into the firm of Greyson & Co., and taught him to believe himself his heir. He had been more than a father to him, for over twenty years, and yet—so ungrateful is the human heart—there was not one feeling of pity in Henry Barton's heart, as he bent over his suffering uncle and gazed fixedly into the pain-dimmed eyes.

"He does not even know me, and yet he is fully conscious. I need not now fear his recovery. Ah! Uncle Greyson, you will not now have power to rob me and my child of the fortune to which you have taught me to look forward on your death; that was a lucky fall for me; you would have changed your will, and made Rose Michel your heiress, and left my pretty Claire almost a beggar. Providence seems to favor me, Rose is in my power. She shall be mine, for marriage with her will make me doubly safe, even should you recover then, your new found heiress would be my wife, her fortune mine. Ha! I hold the winning card, in either case I am safe, safe, safe."

"Oh, yes, sir, quite safe," repeated a quiet voice at his elbow, and looking up with a startled cry, he caught the eyes of the servant Paul fixed upon him intently. Springing to his feet, he caught the fellow by the throat, and demanded in a hoarse voice:

"Toot! what have I said? what have you heard? when did you enter the room? and how dare you creep up behind me like a snake, you black rascal?"

Paul shook himself free from Barton's grasp, and standing at the foot of the bed laughed softly as he answered:

"Hard names! Mr. Barton, rough treatment for a small offense; I came softly into the room to give my master his medicine at the usual hour.

You were standing over him rejoicing that his life is safe, I presumed, and because I made a remark to that effect you almost strangled me."

He spoke calmly, tapping with a spoon on the tiny vial he held in his hand, and smiling good humoredly.

Barton was white with passion. He had always hated Paul, knowing instinctively that he suspected him, and this was the time to finish him. He laughed, as he pointed to the silent occupant of the bed near which both were standing, and exclaimed triumphantly:

"He is now, and always will be hereafter, incapable of managing his own affairs. As his heir, and next of kin, I am master here. And my first act of authority will be to give you your dismissal. I will order the housekeeper to pay you your wages and you will oblige me by going at once."

Again Paul laughed softly, and answered with the same provoking calmness:

"I am sorry that your first act of authority should be disobeyed, Mr. Barton, but I will not go."

Had a bombshell exploded at Henry Barton's feet he could not have been more startled. This open act of rebellion fairly amazed him. He looked into Paul's face, his lips opened to speak again, and for a moment their eyes met. The words he would have uttered died on his lips, his face paled, and turning on his heel he strode out of the room, leaving Paul alone with his master.

The wintry moon shone full upon his face as he descended the broad stone steps of his uncle's mansion, revealing his features to the man who for the last hour had lingered near the house, with his coat buttoned close up to his chin, and his hat drawn down over his eyes.

He was on the opposite side of the street when Barton emerged from the house, and he uttered a sigh of relief.

"At last, at last, I begun to fear my watching had been in vain, now for a chase, my boy!" he muttered, with a smile on his lips, and the light of excitement in his hazel eyes.

Unconscious that he was being followed, Barton walked along briskly, his face white as death, and his dark eyes flashing fire. He was meditating on the recent scene with Paul in his uncle's chamber.

The look in the servant's eyes told him plainly as words could have done, that his muttered soliloquy had been overheard by him.

"Curses on my infernal habit of speaking my thoughts aloud, it is constantly getting me into trouble. That fellow heard me speaking of Rose Michel, lucky for me that I did not mention her hiding place. He hates me bitterly, I know, he would scruple at nothing that might injure me, and yet—and yet, I do not see why I need fear him. My uncle's insanity removes every cause of alarm! Paul may do his worst, he cannot harm me, once Rose Michel is my wife."

With these thoughts running through his brain he continued his rapid walk, pausing once, and looking around him as if in search of something, then starting ahead again, exclaimed again aloud:

"The distance is great, but the walk will do me good, it might not be safe to take a carriage there."

The man who had been following him was only a few feet distant from him now, keeping well in the shadow of the house, and as yet unnoticed by Barton.

He heard the last words and smiled gleefully. He was on the right track at last.

On, on, through the moonlit streets they hurried, the pursuer and the pursued, turning at last into a lonely country road—"The Boston Road." Here the pursuer was obliged to walk far behind, for his footsteps made a sound on the frozen crust of the snow, and he had no desire to be perceived by the man he was following so persistently.

At last their steps led them into the midst of a dense wood, where no ray of moonlight could dissipate the heavy darkness.

Iceicles hung from the bare boughs of the trees, and in some places the snow had drifted in piles higher than their heads.

"This is a cursed hole, and I have almost forgotten in which direction the cottage lies. Fool

that I was not to bring Harper with me!" exclaimed Barton, in a tone too low to reach the ears of the man who was now obliged to keep far in the rear.

For half an hour he continued his toilsome way through the woods, a cry of exultation breaking from his lips at last as a gleam of light shining from a cottage-window straight ahead of him gladdened his sight.

"At last! ha! ha! my dainty miss, you will give me a different answer to-night; if I mistake not, your pride has fallen considerably since last we met."

He was knocking at the cottage door while he meditated thus, and his face was bland and smiling when Mrs. Harper opened it to him.

A cheery fire burned in the little kitchen into which the door opened, and standing before this, warming his numb hands he inquired anxiously:

"How is our patient, Mrs. Harper, I have sent no physician, trusting her entirely to your care, confident that your skill would be sufficient. Give an account of yourself why are you silent?"

There was a ring of fear in his voice, as he caught the woman's arm, and looked for his answer in her face.

CHAPTER XIV.

AT THE WINDOW.

The woman hesitated long before answering. She pitied the girl lying so ill and helpless under her roof, and could not bear to think of consigning her to the arms of a villain whose object was her ruin, she thought, and yet—he was her master, and she had no help for it. She shook off his hand from her arm with a visible shudder, and standing a few paces away from him answered:

"Mr. Barton, I have done everything in my power to relieve the poor child, and she is improving rapidly. Her first words when she came to herself was an inquiry for her father. My son had told me that he was dead, and I thought it best to let her know the truth at once. I told her all, even that she was under your roof. She sank into a death-like swoon, so protracted that I feared she would never again awaken. But I was mistaken, she came to herself like one awakening from a long sleep, looked around her vaguely for a moment, then, with a moan and a shudder, turned her face to the wall like a tired child, and has lain so ever since without uttering a word. She does not sleep, for I see her hands twining themselves round each other constantly, never still, never at rest. Oh, Mr. Barton! she is so young, so child-like, so helpless, I cannot help but pity her."

Barton frowned darkly.

"Have a care, my good woman, that your pity does not interfere with your duty to me; you have long had a comfortable home here, rent free; you might not like to find yourself deprived of it. The girl above is scarcely in a position to recompense you for the sacrifice you would be obliged to make to serve her."

The woman's eyes flashed, but she answered in a conciliating tone:

"Mr. Barton, I have no intention of disobeying your orders; I am very grateful to you for what you have done for my son and myself, and nothing I can do to serve you will be too much to pay the debt I owe you. Do you wish to see the girl?" She curtsied low, with her hand upon the door-knob as she spoke, and Barton forgot his fears.

"You may go up stairs and prepare her for my visit: I will follow you shortly." He replied, and Mrs. Harper hurried away on her errand, while he paced the narrow limits of the little kitchen impatiently.

Villain as he was, he dreaded the meeting with the innocent girl whom he had wronged.

He remembered the look that had been in her pure blue eyes when she raised them unquittingly to his own, and again he heard the sweet, clear young voice ringing in his ears as it had rang when she stood like a young empress before him, and told him unflatteringly that, "not to save a hundred lives would she be his wife."

Then he had had no intention of wedding her, now it was to his interest to do so, but he would

torture her first, as he had sworn to do, until she would sue for the place she had scorned. "Twould be a sweet revenge, the coward thought, it would humble her haughty spirit, it would break her proud heart, and he would have satisfaction for all the slights she had put upon him, when she crept to the shelter of his arms, begging him to shelter her from the world's bitter scorn."

With such dastard thoughts as these in his heart he started to ascend the narrow stairs that led to the door of the room in which Rose was confined.

Mrs. Harper had found her sitting up in the bed, and looking much better than when she had left her.

Her sweet young face was wofully changed; pale always, it was death-like now. The vivid blue eyes were dry and tearless, feverishly, achingly dry, and the sweet, tender mouth dropped piteously. She looked up as Mrs. Harper opened the door, but did not speak.

"My dear you are much better, I see; let me bathe your face and put this warm wrapper on you, and help you over to the window; you will feel much better then, and besides, you are going to have a visitor."

"A visitor!" Rose exclaimed, speaking for the first time and looking up with an expression of absolute horror on her pale face. "A visitor for me? Oh, madam, do not leave me. You have told me I am in his house, in his power; for the love of Heaven do not bring him in my presence—oh, dear madam! dear madam! I shall surely die if you leave me with him—weak, lame, ill, and in his power, obliged to listen to him, unable to fly from him—God above! what shall I do, madam? Are you a woman? Have you a woman's heart in your breast? Can you stand calmly by and look un pityingly on the agony of a helpless orphan girl who has never injured you?"

Rose had flung herself out of the bed, upon her knees at the woman's feet; her sweet young face upturned, white with a nameless horror, the waving golden hair falling back from it and sweeping the ground, and the small, white, wasted hands clinging to her garments.

She pitied the young creature as she never pitied living mortal, yet gold had been her idol all her life, and knowing that both her son and herself owed everything to Henry Barton she dared not risk his anger; this she explained in a voice she in vain tried to control. She threw the heavy merino drawing-robe she had taken from a wardrobe over the girl's head, and raising her from the ground fastened it on her as one would dress a child, while she said:

"Nonsense, girl! Mr. Barton will not harm you; he is your friend, he will not take advantage of your helplessness, you must try to control yourself, and meet him calmly. Why should you fear him?"

Rose listened to her poor attempts at consolation in silence.

She had grown strangely calm; fallen into the apathy of utter despair, and made no effort to deter Mrs. Harper when she began to brush and arrange her beautiful bright hair, but sat like a statue, so white and cold, and motionless. Only the eyes moved, the blue, vivid, restless eyes, roamed round the room, like a bird in a cage seeking for some means of escape.

Sometimes they were raised heavenward, but there was no look of devotion in their shadowy depths, for wild, rebellious thoughts were in her heart.

All her life she had been taught to look up to God in the hour of trial, she had prayed to this always, she had never lost faith, and what was her reward? All her dear ones were taken from her, she was left alone, helpless and penniless, in the power of her enemy—how had her prayer been answered?

This was the question she asked herself over and over again to-night, in very bitterness of soul, but thoughts so wicked and unjust could not long find a home in a heart so gentle as hers, and ere long a cry broke from her quivering lips:

"Father, forgive me, I have been so sorely tried, so sorely tempted."

A great sob broke from her anguished heart, and dropping her golden head upon her breast, she

burst into a passion of sobs and tears, the first she had shed since she received the intelligence of her father's death.

"Poor child! poor child! Weep on; these tears may relieve your poor heart, and save your brain from madness. Do not check them," whispered Mrs. Harper, a suspicious moisture in her own eyes, as she held the girl's slender form in her arms, inwardly praying that Barton might stay below yet a little longer.

Rose was very weak, and she was obliged to bathe her forehead with cold water to keep her from swooning. The sound of heavy footsteps on the wooden stairs aroused her from her semi-stupor; Mrs. Harper put her gently from her arms and arose from her bedside, saying:

"My child, I must leave you for a few moments, Mr. Barton is coming, have no fear; he will not harm you; I will be within call should you need me. Be brave; again I tell you there is no cause for alarm."

"He is coming? Henry Barton is coming!" In a voice hoarse with terror Rose repeated the words, then with a cry that rang out loud and clear and thrilling, awakening the echoes in the silent woods, she sprang to her feet, regardless of their swollen condition, and ere Mrs. Harper could realize her intention, darted to the window and flung it open.

"Better death than the fate to which he dooms me! Thus will I end it!" she cried, flinging herself forward—but just too late. Harper's two hands had clutched her garments as her body was already half out, and in a second Barton had burst into the room and drew her back.

CHAPTER XV.

"MINE."

Of all the words where thrilling sound
Strike through the spirit's depth profound
With echoes far and fine,
What carries more of heavenly bliss
What more of deadly sin than this,
This one word—mine?

Rose's cry, loud, thrilling and replete with exquisite pain penetrated to other ears than those of him who caused her woe.

The man who had shadowed Henry Barton's footsteps all the way from his uncle's residence to this obscure spot, had with difficulty made his way to the lonely cot in the woods, stumbling often, and falling over the ice-clad broken tree boughs that obstructed his path.

He had just reached the door of the strange domicile when the girl's scream awoke the echoes of the silent place.

Guided by the sound he dashed open the door, and sprang up the narrow flight of stairs and into the room from where it proceeded. Barton had caught Rose back from her perilous position and was straining her to his breast despite her struggles, while Mrs. Harper, trembling with nervous terror and excitement, had adjourned to the inner apartment.

"Ah, my pretty bird! what folly to beat your wings against your prison bars. Struggle as you will, there is none near to help you. Cry until your voice fails you, there is none near to hear; you cannot fight with fate, you are helpless, powerless to avert your destiny. Hate, scorn, despise me if you will, you are none the less mine! mine—do you hear, girl? Mine to do with as I will—"

"Liar! coward! dastard! She is not yours! release her this instant from your arms, or by the God above I will send a bullet through your craven heart!"

Barton started, and his face turned white and rigid as if the leaden messenger had indeed speeded its way into his breast, as the words of the stranger who had tracked him here, rung loud and clear through the apartment.

"Wallace!" he ejaculated faintly, and ere he had time to drop his arms from about the girl he was flung to the other end of the apartment, and Rose Michel lay panting like a wounded hare on the breast of Archie Wallace.

The violence with which he had dashed Barton against the opposite wall almost deprived him of breath, and, his head having come in contact with the wall, he lay stunned and almost senseless.

"Take me away while there is time," gasped Rose, clinging in terror to the arm of her preserver, and looking up into his face with a glance of wild appealing pain.

Mrs. Harper had not made her appearance, although through the half-opened door she had seen and heard all. She was afraid of being implicated in Barton's crime, and thought it best to keep out of sight, and besides she was secretly glad that Rose had found a friend.

In answer to Rose's appeal Wallace replied, looking down in infinite pity at the little bandaged feet, stained now with the blood that had oozed through the white linen wrappings:

"My poor girl! You are in the heart of a lonely wood, there is a mile or two between us and the nearest habitation, do you think you will be equal to the journey?"

She followed the direction of his glance, and the look of pain deepened in her limpid, violet eyes, but she strove hard to repress the moan that rose to her lips as she took a few steps toward the door, saying, in a voice she in vain endeavored to control:

"Yes, yes! See how strong I am, I can endure the pain, indeed I can. Oh, please, come quickly! see, he is stirring."

The words ended in a stifled sob, and Wallace, catching up a heavy shawl, wrapped it closely about her fragile, tottering figure, and raised her in his arms easily, as he would have lifted an infant, and bore her down stairs.

The night was bitterly cold, the wind whistled through the leafless trees like mortals in direst agony; but the moon shone brightly in the heavens, and helped to guide Archie Wallace with his burden through the darkness of the woods.

His feet were numb and aching with the cold, he was weary with his long walk, and having eaten nothing for twelve hours, was beginning to feel the pangs of hunger, and yet—and yet he was happy; the girl in his arms was dear as his own life to him. He could look down into her sweet blue eyes, beautiful as the wintry stars throbbing in the dark skies. He could feel the soft touch of her silken gold-bright hair, wind-tossed against his cheek, and the rapid throbbing of her heart against his own. She had appealed to him to take her from the power of her enemy, she made no attempt to withdraw herself from his arms, but lay weak as an infant on his breast.

"My poor little darling, perhaps, perhaps—but no, I must not cherish the mad thought, it would be too great a happiness."

And Archie Wallace, who would have given his life to win this girl's love, would not allow even his thoughts to dwell on the dim unuttered hope that had crept into his heart. "Two or three times Rose begged him to let her walk; but he only answered softly:

"No, Miss Michel, you are far too weak and ill; we are getting along quite nicely now, the wood is far less dense, and we can see our way better."

At last the glimmer of a light straight ahead of them called an exclamation of delight from his lips.

"Thank God, there is a house at last. I will appeal to the occupant for a night's lodging for you, to-morrow I can obtain some conveyance to remove you to your own home."

"My own home!" the girl repeated dreamily. "My God! where is my home? The cottage on the bare hillside is empty; I can no longer call it by that name. Oh, father! darling father! they have hidden you from my sight forever. How you must have cried for your little girl, when you were going out of the world, alone in the night, and leaving her behind, called upon her vainly, when her ears were deaf to your piteous cries. Oh, my father! my only one! now indeed is your Rose alone in the wide, wide world."

The cry seemed wrung from the poor girl's bleeding heart by a power she could not control. She shivered like a leaf in the strong arms that encircled her, and passionate sobs racked her slender frame.

Involuntarily Wallace pressed her closer to his heart and bent his face until his lips touched the golden rings of hair upon her forehead, while in a voice that trembled with emotion, he replied:

"Not alone, dear child, while Archie Wallace has life in his body and strength in his arm; if you trust me, little one, no cherished sister could be more dear than you will be to me. Your presence will brighten my humble home, and bring a ray of sunshine into my poor old mother's lonely life. She lost a daughter, young and fair like you, only two years ago, and for her blue-eyed Jessie's sake, she will love you, little Rose."

He lingered long over the utterance of the sweet name, and his deep, sweet voice trembled with the passionate love he was too loyal to whisper in such an hour as this.

They had reached the house from which the light proceeded by this time, and Rose insisted on being placed upon her feet, declaring she was much stronger and better.

It was a poor-looking hovel before which they stood, but it would afford a shelter until he could provide a better one for the sufferer, and with a wildly beating heart he knocked upon the paintless door.

A night-capped head was quickly thrust from one of the shutterless windows, and a cracked voice called out:

"Who's there? What's wanted at this hour o' the night?"

"A night's shelter. We—my sister and I—have been lost in the woods. I will pay you well if you will give her a bed, however humble; I will sleep in the barn until morning."

The night-cap had disappeared, and in a moment a tall, fallow-faced old woman, white haired and feeble, opened the door, carrying a lighted candle in her hand.

She peered curiously and half suspiciously out into the faces of the midnight visitors; then, as her eyes fell upon the white, sweet face of Rose, she opened the door wider, and motioned them to enter, saying in the cracked, feeble voice of age:

"Madge Wild's ear was never yet deaf to the call of charity and distress. You are welcome to the poor shelter her roof affords. My old man has been bed-ridden for nearly three years, and it must be a heart lost to all human feeling that would willingly harm or injure us in return for our hospitality. I will trust you both. This poor child is weak and ill, I fear; let her come to the fire. I will make her a shake-down before it. You say you are her brother, sir; I will not doubt your words; her face is innocent and pure. God grant you be not deceiving me."

With these words the old woman motioned the wanderers toward a cheery fire and placed a chair for Rose, not noticing her bleeding, bandaged feet.

Archie Wallace's fine face flushed hotly; he had spoken of Rose as his sister on the impulse of the moment, and the old woman's unconscious rebuke wrung his heart to such an extent that he was on the point of revealing to her the whole pitiful story of Rose's wrongs, but on second thought he reflected that the romantic story would scarcely find credence with the practical old lady, and held his peace.

CHAPTER XVI.

BARTON MAKES ANOTHER ENEMY.

WHEN Henry Barton came to himself, after the shock Wallace's strong right arm had given him, Mrs. Harper was bending over him, bathing his brow with cold water and chaffing his limp hands. As a realization of his position dawned upon him, after the first moment of bewildered uncertainty, he sprang to his feet with a strength born of rage, and grasping the woman's arm, cried in a hoarse whisper:

"Fool! why are you wasting your time with me? Where is the girl I entrusted to your care? Woe betide you if you have let her make good her escape!"

Something like a smile curved the woman's thin, compressed lips, and her eyes wore a look of utter contempt and scorn as she replied:

"Mr. Barton, what would my woman's strength have availed against that of the man who flung you from his path as easily as you would have crushed a worm beneath your heel."

The words stung him, no less than the tone in which they were uttered, and mad with baffled

rage, he forgot his manhood, and with one sweep of his strong arm stretched her prostrate at his feet, hissing between his clenched teeth:

"Woman! you have betrayed me! take that as your reward!"

The air of the house seemed to stifle him, and despite the lateness of the hour and the bitter cold, he hurried away from it, muttering aloud, as was his invariable custom when excited or angry.

"Curses on that infernal engineer—he is gifted with the strength of a Samson. Heavens! how my poor head reels, my brain seems to be on fire. Am I to brook so mean a rival as this pauper Wallace? By the God above! never! I will yet have that girl in my power, if to do it I am compelled to sacrifice the lives of those who stand between us. Let Archie Wallace do his worst, I do not fear him; my uncle is incapable of judging me now, and I have no cause for apprehension. Every obstacle placed in my path makes me only the more determined to possess that for which I would give ten years of my life—the hand of Rose Michel, the little factory girl. When I have accomplished my end—then, my haughty beauty, you shall shed tears of blood for every moment's trouble you have given me; you will carry your head a trifle less high, I imagine, and your blue eyes will scarcely look into my own with such dauntless defiance."

Barton was hurrying along with all the speed of which he was capable, considering the slippery roads, in the direction of Lowell. His head ached and throbbed with a fierce pain, and a blinding mist was before his eyes, but he was scarcely conscious of his own suffering, so intent was his heart on the ruin of the poor orphan girl.

Reaching his home at last he let himself in with a latch-key, and crept noiselessly up the stairs to his own chamber, but although he retired to bed he could not sleep, weary and exhausted as he was; toward morning he fell into a doze, only to start up with drops of cold perspiration lying like beads on his forehead, and his limbs shaking as with a palsy.

"God, what horrible dreams! and a demon holding me back from saving her. My darling, my precious, what harm can come to you while your father lives?"

He spoke in a voice of passionate eagerness, as if trying to assure himself that his child was in no danger, but there was a strange white shadow over his dark face, and a look of terror in the restless, brilliant eyes.

He filled a glass with brandy from the decanter on his dressing-table and drank it eagerly, then rang for his servant.

Harper made his appearance in a moment, eyeing his master furtively from under his drooped lids, as he inquired, in a low, guarded voice:

"Well, sir, did you find everything arranged according to your directions? Is the lady getting along nicely under my mother's care?"

"Curses on your mother and the lady, as you are pleased to call her. She has escaped me again, the jade. Your mother pitied her, and I am half-inclined to believe aided in her escape. You need not glare at me so wildly—I doubt even your fidelity. Archie Wallace, the man who is employed as engineer in our factory, dogged my footsteps to-night and snatched my prize from out my very arms; who set him on my track? Villain, traitor, I have long suspected you of playing a double game. Fool, you may do your worst, I openly defy you to injure me. I would have given you my last dollar rather than have had you betray me to my uncle three days ago; but now, now, Jasper Harper, go to him with your trumped-up tales if you will. Ha, ha, ha, he will give you little heed, I warrant."

The fumes of the liquor he had drunk fired his brain, and he seemed half beside himself with rage.

Harper gazed into his face in utter amazement. He had often seen his master in a passion before to-day, but this open defiance literally petrified him.

He had heard of Walter Greyson's unfortunate accident, but never for a moment realized that this would interfere with the treacherous plans he had formed for Henry Barton's ruin; in his heart he knew that Greyson was the only living

being Barton feared or dreaded, and could well understand the cause of his triumphant laughter.

The man's face grew fairly livid with baffled rage and despair, and his small, cunning eyes emitted a greenish light, and shaking his fist under Barton's very nose, he hissed out between his clenched teeth the words:

"You defy me, do you, Henry Barton? Wait, wait, and we will see who wins in the battle that from this hour will wage between us. I leave your employ to-night—I do not care to give you a chance to discharge me, but remember the hour is not far distant when I shall have my triumph. It is your turn to-day, mine will be to-morrow. I have served you well, and you chose to throw down the challenge. Abide by the consequence, for so surely as there is a blue sky above us you shall reap bitter fruit from the seed you have sown to-day. Ay, coward that you are, you shrink from me, you are afraid of me. You would strike me dead at your feet if you had one spark of courage, you miserable persecutor of helpless women."

A coward at heart, Barton was indeed in mortal fear of the man whose dangerous temper he had aroused, and walking over to one of the low French windows he stood drumming on the panes, without a word of reply.

When the door closed on Harper, and he found himself alone, he partook freely of the liquor, more alarmed than he would have confessed to himself by the servant's threats of vengeance; he had made a bitter enemy of the man, and knew there was no chance of his relenting. Yet how could he injure him; rich, powerful, and with no one to control his actions, why should he fear a menial's vengeance?

Over and over again he asked himself this question, yet the answer his conscience whispered did not satisfy him.

All through the long day that followed he was restless and uneasy. Wallace did not make his appearance.

When the great bell rang out the noonday hour and the workers ceased from their toil to partake of their scanty dinner, Barton threw himself down upon one of the leather couches in his office and settled himself down for an hour's sleep. A low tap upon the door disturbed him, and with a muttered curse at the intrusion, he called out "Come in."

The door was pushed slowly open, and little Minnie Deane entered, pale and timid, and stood before him.

The poor child could not have chosen a worse time for her visit. He knew she had come to him for information concerning Rose Michel, and the very name of the girl he hated so bitterly to-day roused all the demon in his nature. Minnie Deane's soft, innocent eyes, fastened upon him with such a reproachful gaze, seemed to accuse him of foul play, and his face darkened, while his voice quivered with passion as he sprang to his feet and grasped her arm fiercely, crying:

"Impudent jade; how dare you look at me like that? What do I know about your pauper friend? What is she or any like her to me? Go and search for her; if you cannot find her in the hospital, to which I once before directed you, go in search of her if you will; but go whither you may, never darken the doors of this factory again. I do not require your services longer—go!"

He pointed toward the door as he spoke, and Minnie, white to the very lips, obeyed him in silence, knowing how little mercy she might expect from one so utterly base and heartless as Henry Barton.

CHAPTER XVII.

ROSE'S LOVER.

THE days and weeks glided on, until a month had passed since the accident which had so nearly ended the life of Rose Michel.

The winter was now far advanced, yet the snow lay a couple of feet deep on the country roads, and the frost king with deft fingers still drew delicate traceries over the window panes.

In a neat but humble room on the top floor of a tenement house, only a few squares distant from Greyson's factory, an old, white-haired woman and a pale, golden-haired girl are bending over

some sewing. The former seems to be weak and feeble, and several times her hand is pressed over her weary eyes, as if to ease the throbbing pain that almost blinds them, but no word of complaint comes from her lips, and the feeble hands go back to their task as before.

The young girl for a time regards her furtively from under the drooped golden lashes of her downcast eyes, and then, with heaving breast, and lips from which the stifled sobs break uncontrolled, lets her sewing drop unheeded to the floor and flings herself on her knees before the old woman, clasping her slender hands around the bent shoulders, and drawing her white head down upon her breast, while in a voice low and sweet as the distant tinkle of silvery bells, she murmurs:

"Mrs. Wallace! my dear old friend, my second mother! You are ill and suffering, yet you will not complain. You are working too hard, your eyes pain and burn, and ache, and you can scarce see the work before you for the blinding tears that rise to them; you are grieving for your boy, your noble son, out from the dawn of day till the setting of the sun, searching, searching everywhere for employment, for the work so hard to obtain; I have been nearly a month under your roof, and you tell me continually that the poor help I am able to afford you, repays you amply for what you have done for me. But I know better, it is your generous heart that speaks, not your common sense; I have been happy here, as happy as one so utterly friendless and desolate could ever hope to be; it was so quiet, so peaceful, and I have learned to love you so, you, and—and my brother—your noble son, who saved me from a fate worse, ten thousand times, than death. But I must leave you now, I know how hard you strive to keep the wolf from the door; the little board your son had laid away for a rainy day is almost spent, there is no prospect of work for him, and you are almost in despair; I, thanks to your kind and tender care, am able to seek employment for myself, and I will hesitate no longer to do so. You have urged me to remain with you, your son has been all that a brother could have been to me, but I can be a burden no longer, you will not surely blame me, you would not wish to add to the load your boy already has to bear."

The girl spoke eagerly, a crimson spot burning hotly on either fair cheek, and her soft, violet eyes raised appealingly to the elder woman's face. The latter had drawn herself out of the girl's embrace, and was staring at her in amazement. When at last the golden-bright head fell forward on her shoulder, and the soft arms twined themselves once more round her waist, she dropped her aged face until it was hid in the girl's clustering curls, and throwing her arms about her, rocked slowly backward and forward, weeping softly. At last she spoke, the quivering, age-weakened voice half-stifled in tears.

"Oh! my dearie! my wee bonny lassie! dinna ye gang awa', dinna ye gang awa', the lad would nigh brack his big heart. He is main fond o' ye, lassie; aye, fonder nor ere he was of my wee Jessie, my blue-eyed girlie, sleepin' in her narrow grave aneath the snaw. You are braw and comely, my lassie, and he loves you as the man loves the woman he would make his wife; he looks for you when he come in a-weary at nicht, and his eyes shine like suns if they but licht upon your bonny bright head; 'tis you who would add to his load by leavin' him to strive on, and work when he got it to do, for the auld mither in the chimney nook, wi' nae smile but hers to welcome his comin', nae voice but hers to speed his going. Oh, my pretty Rose, there would e'en be a void in his heart the puir, auld mither couldna fill."

The girl had crept out of the speaker's arms, and was regarding her with heaving breast and wildly dilated eyes. The last vestige of color had faded from her face and she was white to the very lips.

"Mrs. Wallace!" she faltered—"I—I never suspected this, never, never! as Heaven is my Judge. Your son rescued me from a man who sought my ruin. He pitied my loneliness, and treated me as a brother would a loved sister; he brought me to his peaceful home, and you—his mother—loved me for sake of the lost Jessie

whom I so much resemble; that he loved me with a love different from this, I never once imagined; had I done so—"

"Had you done so, how would you have acted, my precious one, my darling Rose? My mother has betrayed my secret, I know by your answer that you never suspected it. Has it angered you, do you hate me for daring to cherish the hope of one day making you my wife, answer me, pulse of my heart, light of my eyes, my darling?"

It was Archie Wallace who spoke; Archie Wallace who had crept softly up behind her, and encircled her with his arms, ere she was aware of his presence.

She sprang away from him, her blue eyes blazing with an angry light, her pale cheeks crimsoned with excitement; two or three times she attempted to speak, but the surging tears choked her, and her voice died away in low, passionate sobs.

Inexpressibly shocked and grieved, Archie Wallace stood like one rooted to the spot, gazing into her passion stirred face, unable to speak for the time.

When at last he could control himself, he addressed her, in a voice, that was strangely strained and altered.

"Forgive me, Rose, I was indeed presumptuous to expect you to share the wretched home that is all I have to offer you, to tie your bright young life to mine, and settle down in the humdrum life of a mechanic's wife. Oh, Rose, my little love, 'twill be very hard to unlearn the lesson I have taught myself."

Archie was standing by the low mantel-shelf, with his face hidden on his folded arms, and his form quivering with suppressed excitement. There was a ring of pain in his low, broken voice, and Rose, who, until now stood weeping softly, approached him and let her hand fall lightly on his arm.

He started and shivered under her touch, but did not lift his haggard face to hers.

She called his name softly, and like one scarcely conscious of his actions he looked up at her. She was clinging to his arm with a look in her sweet violet eyes that made his heart throb wildly. What, if after all, in pity for his sorrow, she would consent to be his wife. He banished the wild thought quickly, and taking her hand from off his arm held it in his own, while she spoke:

"Archie, forgive me, and do not ask for pardon of me who should be proud to have won the love of a true heart. Your declaration surprised me; I was hurt and angry, not that you told your love, but because I thought you offered it in a mistaken feeling of pity for my loneliness and poverty. How could I think different? You never spoke half a dozen words to me in your life until the night you rescued me from Henry Barton's power. You brought me to your home and have never since uttered a word in my presence that would lead me to think you cared for me other than with a brother's love. To-night, when I saw your mother toiling over work she was not able to do, and would not be obliged to do were it not for the added expense and trouble I have been to her, I told her I could no longer remain here in idleness. You entered unawares and heard me; your generous heart cried out against the thought of my facing the great cold world alone, and on the impulse of the moment you offered me the shelter of a home, not wretched, as you have termed it, but peaceful and happy despite its poverty. Why should I deem you presumptuous, I who have nothing, whose only prospect for the future is a life of ill paid toil—"

The girl's low sad voice faltered, her proudly curved lips quivered like a grieved child's, and the golden fringed lips drooped heavily over the limpid violet eyes.

Mrs. Wallace had been called out by a neighbor, to see a sick girl, who was thought to be dying in a little hall bedroom, on the floor below, and Archie and Rose were left alone.

For a time there was a silence between them, which Archie was the first to break.

Holding his companion's hand, in a firm, respectful clasp he said, with a gleam of the old eager hope in his dark eyes:

"Rose, you have been mistaken in my motives,

listen while I tell you how long I have loved you."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A RIFT IN THE CLOUDS.

"LISTEN while I tell you how long I have loved you," Archie had said, and with a strange new feeling in her heart and a crimson flush staining cheeks and brow, she waited for him to speak.

"Long ago, my little Rose, when I first entered Greyson's factory, your face attracted my attention. It was so young, and child-like, and you were so frail and delicate-looking that I always associated it with that of my lost Jessie. I learned to watch for your coming in the morning, and often when you were a moment late grew uneasy lest you were ill or in trouble. One day, one sultry day in midsummer you were faint and exhausted with heat and fatigue. I knew it, and when the working day was over, and you started for your home, I followed at a distance, fearing you would faint by the way, for your face was white as death. You knew nothing of this, and although I longed to offer you the support of my arm, I was obliged to keep at a distance, fearful of offending you.

"You walked feebly, like one who is very weary, stopping at times and pressing your hand to your heart as if there was pain there. A little ahead of you on the road an old woman was toiling along, carrying a basket that seemed too heavy for her feeble strength. I watched you closely, Rose, and saw you start forward and take it from her arms as soon as you noticed her.

"It was but a little act of kindness, yet it endeared you to me a thousand fold—of course, as you may remember, I came up then to you and released you of your burden, crying out in surprise when my eyes fell upon the face of its owner, for the woman who you had so generously offered to assist was no other than my own mother—aye! you are astonished: you did not recognize her face, and she too has forgotten the little girl who carried her basket eighteen months ago.

"But since that hour I have loved you, little one, with a devotion that has never wavered, nor known a moment's change. The eyes of love are quick to note the workings of the human heart and I soon saw that you feared Henry Barton. I watched him closely and found that you had good reason to do so, and had it not been for the suspicion I had of him I might not have been on hand in the hour of your peril.

"Ah, Rose, it was more than feeling of pity that has actuated me all this time, it was more than pity that prompted me to speak the mad words I have uttered to-night; forgive me, darling, forget my folly, and be as you have been for the past month, my sister, the light of my home, and the pride and joy of my heart. I have found, employment at last, or at least I am promised a position in a large factory, on the suburbs of Boston. My dear old mother, and my little sister will not be obliged to work so hard any more—and, and—"

Archie paused and turned away with a silent pressure of the hand he had held until now.

It was so hard to dissipate the bright dreams he had cherished, that he could not add the words he would have spoken:

"We will be happy."

Rose Michel's beautiful face was uplifted now, the light of a new happiness shone in the violet depths of her lustrous eyes, and her cheeks were red as the flower whose name she bore.

Her shining eyes followed her lover's movements, and when he threw himself wearily into the old leathern arm-chair his mother had lately occupied, she approached him, and once again the light touch of her hand upon his shoulder aroused him from the sad reverie into which he had fallen.

One glance into her sweet, blushing face, and with a low cry of rapture he caught her to his heart, showering passionate kisses on lips, and cheeks, and brow.

Then holding her from him, looked long into the pure blue eyes, raised so shyly to meet his own.

"My darling, my beautiful Rose, can I inter-

pret your looks aright, have I indeed won the priceless treasure of your love. My pet, my wee birdie, this is indeed the happiest moment of my life."

Alas! poor fond hearts! in this moment of supreme bliss the past was forgotten, the future unthought of, and an eternity of happiness crowded into a few brief moments. No foreboding shadow of the woe that was so soon to darken their lives, came to dim the brightness of their sweet love-dream, and Mrs. Wallace, entering the room a few moments later, with the traces of tears on her broad Scotch face, found the lovers seated side by side, with hands close clasped in eloquent silence.

"The puir wee lassie below—" she began but paused suddenly, with her eyes fastened intently on the faces of the happy pair. Archie's clear, deep voice broke the silence:

"Mother, I have good news for you to-night, our little Rose has promised to be my wife, your daughter, my mother; and you will love her dearly as you would have loved our angel, Jessie, had Heaven spared her to you, will you not?"

The mother dropped her white head upon her son's shoulder, and wept softly with one of Rose's hands clasped tightly in her own.

She was happy in her boy's happiness; beautiful golden-haired Rose was very dear to her, and yet—on this night of all others, her old heart strained out to the loved, and lost, the "angel Jessie," her baby, the sunny hearted child of her old age, sleeping the last long, dreamless sleep under the snow, in her early grave. Archie and Rose knew what direction her thoughts had taken, and the former smoothed the white hair tenderly, while the latter pressed her lips in silent sympathy to the withered, toil-hardened hand she held.

At last the mother smiled through her tears, and as if in apology for having cast a damper on their joy, exclaimed:

"Dinna be wroth wi' me, my bairns, I couldna help it, indeed, I couldna help it, tears come wi' joy sometimes, dinna ye think them ill omens?"

Rose shuddered slightly, there was something like awe in the old woman's voice as she spoke the last words, and the wind whistled loud and shrill outside the house, and rattled and roared through the wide chimneys, like the cries of mortals in distress, a strange spell of silence seemed to have fallen on the little group, and when at last Archie rose to retire to the little dark bedroom in which he slept, Rose imagined his face had lost something of its radiance. He held her hand for one brief moment to his lips, and with a murmured blessing, and a light kiss on his mother's forehead, retired to dream of the future that was to be blessed with the love of beautiful Rose Michel.

CHAPTER XIX.

PARTING.

"Starved in the busy city
Yet mayhap a mother has smiled
In the old time days of happiness,
In the laughing eyes of her child;
These eyes that now glare with a strong stare
And gleam with a radiance wild."

With the first dawn of day Archie Wallace was astir, preparing himself for his journey to Boston. The old mother packed a few articles of clothing, made ready his simple morning meal, and assisted him in his preparations, moving around softly that she might not disturb Rose. But the latter was not sleeping, and soon walked out, looking fresh and sweet as a daisy in her dark calico garment, with a band of blue ribbon holding back the clustering golden curls from her brow. Archie's heart bounded with pride as he drew her to him, and imprinted a kiss upon her blushing cheeks.

"My little wife that is to be, the memory of your sweet face will urge me on to greater exertions, and before many weeks you shall have a little home nearer to my place of employment, where I need not be parted from my dear old mother and my sweet little wife. And now if I would catch the stage-coach in time I must leave you. Kiss me once, dear love, and wish me luck on my journey."

Rose raised her lips to his, and the shy, blue

eyes, bright with the light of love, looked full into his own.

"God ever bless you, my Archie, and may we not be long separated."

The sweet lips murmured, and for a moment the tiny hands clung round his neck, and the bright head rested on his breast. Then with a last, lingering kiss, he put her gently from him, and turned to where the mother had been standing to take his farewell of her.

She was not there, and for a moment he could not think what had become of her; then a thought flashed upon him. She had gone down to the door to speak the parting word to him alone.

"Poor mother! poor, dear old mother!" he whispered, hurrying down stairs with a carpet-bag under his arm. He had been right in his conjecture.

Mrs. Wallace stood in the doorway, her aged face looking strangely worn and haggard, and her eyes misty with the tears she had been trying in vain to banish. He opened his arms and drew her into them, startled by the death-like look of the dear old face. For a moment she sobbed weakly, clinging to him wildly, and calling him by every endearing name, as though she were parting from him forever, or as though the shadow of the future loomed darkly before her.

"Why, mother mine! what a time you make! one would think I was going to the other end of the world, instead of to a neighboring city, in which you are soon to join me. Come, cheer up, I will write to you and little Rose every day, and you will laugh at your folly when you learn how hopeful and happy I am."

He put her gently out of his arms as he spoke, and opened the hall door to pass out. Just as he did so a man on horseback rode past at full speed, a hard-looking, haggard-faced man, with a look of horror frozen in the dark depths of his dilated eyes.

"Henry Barton! as I live! what in the name of all that is wonderful can bring him out at this early hour? His face is fairly corpse-like, something unusual has happened I feel certain. Mother! look well to my little Rose, for if the wolf knew the watch-dog was off guard he would find his way into the fold and woe to my lamb if he got his clutches on her again."

With these words Archie Wallace turned his back on the humble home within whose walls such happiness had come to him, never again to cross its threshold, never again. The old mother slowly ascended the stairs that led to her rooms, stopping on the way to look in at the girl who was slowly breathing her young life away, in the bare hall-bedroom beneath her own.

The gray light of morning, shone into the miserable little room, with its uncarpeted floor and bare wall, entering through the curtainless and shutterless window at the head of the low cot bed, upon which the young sufferer lay.

She was very young, scarcely older than Rose Michel, and must have been very fair ere the ravages of sickness and hunger robbed her eye of its luster, and her cheek of its bloom.

She was sleeping peacefully, no longer in pain, and on her pale, wasted face was written clearly the impress of the last great messenger, who would ere many hours open his arms, kindly arms, sometimes, to take her into the dread hereafter, the distant land unknown and unexplored to which our loved ones are called away but from which they never return.

"An, Christ, that it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be."

Mrs. Wallace bent over the dying girl, and peered anxiously into the white, wan face, and a tear fell from her eye upon the marble brow, upon which the dews of death were fast gathering.

"Puir lassie! puir lonely lassie!" murmured the old woman, and as if the pitying words penetrated the dulled brain, the girl stirred in her sleep, and muttered the name "Rose, Rose."

"Rose! Rose! always Rose!" repeated Mrs. Wallace, with a perplexed look on her good-natured face. "I didna want my pretty Rose to cast her bonny een on such a sight as this, but mayhap the puir lass ha' met my Rose about the factory, an' calls for her; it wouldna be richt so deny her now."

The thought no sooner entered her brain than she hurried up stairs, and told Rose for the first time of the desolate girl dying alone in the room below, but withheld the fact that she had called upon the name of Rose.

Rose's sweet flower face paled, and the tears dimmed her violet eyes.

"Poor girl, poor girl! Oh, Mrs. Wallace, why did you not tell me before? I might have been able to do something for her," she cried, hurrying down to the little chamber indicated.

A cold chill struck her as she opened the door and entered, and she shivered as she bent for a moment over the form of the dying girl, and peered anxiously into the white face framed by the loosened masses of tangled nut-brown hair.

Only for a moment did she gaze, and then, with a low cry of pain, sank down on her knees by the bedside, burying her face in the pillow beside that of the young sufferer, and moaning piteously:

"Minnie Deane! Minnie Deane? Has it come to this? Is it thus we meet again? Oh, my God, this is dreadful!"

CHAPTER XX.

AT REST AT LAST.

It was indeed Minnie Deane who lay dying in the wretched room in the crowded tenement, so near to Rose Michel that she had often heard the sound of her footfalls in the room above, all unconscious that she was so near.

The shock had been almost too much for Rose's feeble strength, and her face was as white as that of the poor girl on the pillow beside her own, as she called wildly on Minnie's name. Her voice so well remembered, so fondly loved, roused the sick girl from her slumber, and she attempted to raise herself on her elbow, but she fell back again, exhausted by the effort.

"Rose, are you near me? I thought I heard your voice," she cried, such intense longing, such yearning tenderness in her voice that Rose could only sob passionately, unable for a moment to speak.

"Oh, Minnie, little friend, my heart aches for you; if I had known, if I had only known. Oh, darling! this is very hard, is there nothing I can do for you? You will not die, I will do anything in my power to save you, my poor little friend, my dear Minnie."

She had gathered the poor girl in her arms, and was kissing her cold lips and cheeks as if she would fain warm them into life, or call back into them the warm life-blood chilled forever.

Minnie smiled mournfully, gently caressing Rose's cheek with her little wasted hand.

"My dear Rose, you have done much for me already; the sight of your sweet face has given me new life—my little friend, I never knew how dear you were to me until you were no longer with me."

Minnie's low broken voice died away in a passionate sob, and the feeble arms dropped from about Rose's waist.

"My God! I have killed her," Rose cried wildly, seeing the white lids drop heavily over Minnie's eyes. But she had not killed her, the excitement of the moment had been too much for her, and a momentary weakness was the result.

Rose held a glass of cold water to her lips, and she breathed again regularly.

There was a look of peace and quiet happiness on her face, and she smiled when her eyes again fell upon Rose, by her bedside. "Talk to me dear, tell me all that has happened to you since we parted, you cannot shorten my hours, they are numbered. Nay! do not weep, sweet Rose, it is better so! I will welcome death as a friend, I am so tired, so tired darling; and I have suffered so. They left me all alone, father, mother, sister, brothers, all were called away; and I, the youngest of them all, was left alone, penniless and friendless in the wide world. Grief can long be borne, my darling, and I still lived on, working when I could get work to do, and paying my way when I had money to pay it. I was discharged from the Greyson factory shortly after your unfortunate accident. I have searched the city through for employment since, but failed to find it.

"I never despaired, until I fell in the street from exhaustion, having eaten nothing in forty-

eight hours; I was carried to a police-station, and when I came to myself and was again sent out into the street, I found a ten-dollar bill in my hand, the gift of charity. You must know how low I have fallen when I did not return with the money, but sought a place in which to lay my weary head; I found this room, the people who have hired the apartments to which it belong having no use for it, and in consideration of two dollars a week they gave it to me. I have been here two weeks, and have never once risen from my bed, nor shall I ever rise, dear Rose, until I am lifted into the coffin provided by charity! Darling! your sobs go to my heart, why should you grieve for me? I am so happy at the thought of release, so happy, Rose, you would not try to keep me if you only knew how welcome will be the rest of the grave."

Rose could not answer; quick, passionate sobs choked her utterance, and the tears were streaming down her pale cheeks. Minnie was growing visibly weaker, and with every fleeting moment her breath came shorter. Once Mrs. Wallace opened the door, but seeing the sick girl reclining in Rose's arms, closed it softly and stole up stairs, deeming it best to leave them alone.

The exertion of talking told fearfully on the dying girl. She continued to sink rapidly, until just as the clock struck the hour of twelve, and the noonday sun shone in the heavens, when a blue line showed itself under drooped lids, and around the close drawn lips of the young sufferer, and the awful gray shadow settled over her face, the shadow of the death angel's wings. In mortal terror poor Rose called for Mrs. Wallace, and the good woman came quickly down the stairs, with a bowl of gruel in her hand, for the invalid.

One look into the pale, rigid face among the pillows and the bowl was pushed hastily away, while the good-hearted old woman raised the dying girl in her arms.

"Puir girlie! puir wee lassie! it is almost over," she whispered, while Rose could only sob and moan, utterly unnerved in the presence of the great destroyer.

The suffering girl was conscious, painfully conscious of every movement round her, and her death-dimmed eyes followed every movement of the girl whom she had loved so dearly, with a glance that appealed to her not to leave her till all was over.

For nearly an hour poor Minnie suffered acutely, sometimes she sank for one brief moment at a time into a state of insensibility, only to rally again, painfully alive to the sufferings she endured.

At last all pain left her. She lay back upon her pillows, wan and white, and exhausted.

Rose bent over her, chaffing her cold hands, and bathing her icy brow.

When Minnie spoke again her voice was only like a whisper, but a smile of infinite peace lingered round her pretty mouth.

"Rose, my darling—kiss me once—'tis almost over; and I am so tired, so very tired, do not weep, little friend, 'tis better so; hark—that music! 'tis very sweet, do you hear it, Rose—oh, love! I am sinking down—I am drifting away from you—darling, darling! Minnie is at rest, at rest—at last."

CHAPTER XXI.

CAST ON THE WORLD.

MINNIE was indeed at rest; the poor child's troubles were over at last. She had not seen twenty years of life, yet death was welcome, and she fell asleep like a tired child weary of the ceaseless toil and wearying cares that had beset her path.

Pale, sad-faced and altered, Rose left the bed on which lay all that was mortal of sweet Minnie Deane, and throwing herself down in an abandonment of grief on the humble couch she called her own in Mrs. Wallace's room, she sobbed like one who could not be comforted, while the kind-hearted old woman busied herself about the inanimate form in the room below, smoothing the tangled brown hair and folding the tired hands over the pulseless breast.

When it was known through the house that the

pale-faced young girl, who had hired a room on the third floor was dead, a great deal of sympathy was expressed (as is always the case when it is too late), and a collection was raised among the tenants for the purpose of burying her in consecrated ground.

Two days later and Rose stood beside the plain coffin, taking a last farewell of the little friend who had never given her a harsh word, who had been, among a hundred companions, her only friend.

Very sweet and fair she looked in her snowy shroud, with a single white rose, which Rose had placed in her hand, lying so still and pure upon her breast, and a smile upon her parted lips, a smile of infinite peace.

Over and over again the weeping Rose kissed the silent lips and the marble brow of her who would never again return her caresses, ere the coffin lid was screwed down, and the dear, patient face was hidden from her sight forever.

Several of the neighbors followed the remains to the little valley churchyard where Minnie Deane was laid away to sleep under the snow, only a few feet distant from the spot where blue-eyed Jessie Wallace slept so peacefully.

For several days after the funeral Rose was silent and reserved, and moved about the house so pale and altered, that Mrs. Wallace began to fear that her health was failing her; letters came regularly from Archie, but even these failed to arouse Rose to even a semblance of her former self.

Two weeks passed, each day bringing a note or letter from the absent one. At the end of this time the daily missive failed to arrive, and Rose's sad blue eyes would darken, and dilate, when the post-man gave the same unwelcome answer, "No letter, no letter to-day." Day after day this was the invariable answer, until the mother's heart grew sick with an awful fear, and Rose's face was white as the winter's snow.

For nearly a week this suspense continued before either mentioned to the other her fears. At last the mother's heart could suffer and endure no longer, and dropping her white head in Rose's lap she sobbed aloud:

"Oh, my boy! my ain dear lad; he would neglect his puir old mither wilfully, he is ill among strangers, my bonny boy! my Archie."

Rose could not speak, she had no words to comfort such grief as this, and could only stroke the bent head in sympathy.

All through the long night that followed the anxious mother paced the floor, pressing her withered hands tightly against her aching heart, and moaning like one in pain. Rose tried in vain to speak some words of hope and cheer, she was herself sick with a terrible dread of she knew not what, and her words belied the haunting terror in her blue, dilated eyes.

Towards morning the old woman ceased her rapid restless pacing to and fro, and sank down in the leather chair she always occupied, with her face turned away from Rose, towards the fire. Rose had thrown herself without undressing on the bed, but no sleep visited her weary eyes. She was haunted by a vague foreboding of approaching evil, and as the hours wore on, and the aged woman sitting so motionless and silent in the chimney nook never moved or altered her position, she became alarmed, and springing from the bed to her chair, threw herself on her knees before the woman who was her only friend.

"Mrs. Wallace! my mother! speak to me, why are you so silent?" she cried, peering into the bent face in the dim gray light of the morning.

That face was ghastly pale, and the brow to which she pressed her sweet young lips was icy cold. "My God what is this! Oh, my more than mother, speak to me, do not look so white and cold, your eyes look on me with no sight in them! Oh, Heaven what shall I do, what shall I do?"

Her voice rang through the lonely room, awakening a thousand echoes in the hushed silence of the early dawn, that clear young voice thrilling with a terrible anguish, wild with an unutterable despair. As if that pitiful cry had called the departing soul back from the shores of the dark river, a convulsive shudder ran through the worn-out old frame, and the death-dimmed eyes wan-

dered slowly around with no sight in their glassy depths.

Faintly, like a whisper from the spirit-land came the one word, "Rose," and with a cry expressive of infinite relief, Rose flung herself once again on her knees before the huge chair, twining her arms about its dying occupant, and drawing the white head down upon her breast, pressing innumerable kisses on the cold face and sightless eyes.

"Water!" the old woman whispered; and she held a glass of water to the pallid lips. This seemed to revive her and once again she spoke:

"Rose, my puir, wee lassie; my ain darling! dinna weep for me—we will meet again—you and Archie, and I, in heaven. I must e'en gang first awa', my wee girlie calls me from the ither shore. —Rose, my Archie will yet come back to you, something whispers me so in this last hour; tell him I die blessing you both, my ain dear ones. Ah! it has come! Rose, come closer! Bless you —bless you, my Archie, my darlin'!—Wait for me, Jessie lass, tak my hand, the road is sae dark wait, my ain Jessie—the auld mither comes at last."

A quick, convulsive shudder distorted the aged face, the white head fell heavily forward on Rose's shoulder, and she realized with a pang that rent her heart, that never again would the kind old voice fall upon her ear to soothe her grief or rejoice in her happiness.

Archie's mother was dead, and she was once more homeless, penniless, alone in the world. She had written time and again to Archie since his letters ceased, but could gain no knowledge of his whereabouts. What was she to do; where obtain money for the interment of her dear old friend's remains?

CHAPTER XXII.

OLD TIME MEMORIES.

We must now for a time return to Henry Barton, whom we left fretting and fuming over his disappointment, and vowing all manner of vengeance on Archie Wallace and Rose Michel. He never thought of Minnie Deane after dismissing her from the factory, for his mind was too fully occupied with other thoughts and schemes to waste one moment's reflection on the poor little girl's fate.

His uncle's health improved rapidly, and in less than a month he was able to walk about the house and grounds, hearty and robust as before; but although he recognized everyone around him, his mind seemed to be a perfect blank.

He spoke of nothing that would lead anyone to suppose that he had any memory of the past, although at times there was a look in the clear depths of his dark eyes that would puzzle the physicians—who still visited him at intervals—to comprehend. It was so full of intelligence and quiet contempt for their opinion.

"That man will yet regain his memory, and it sometimes appears to me as if he already remembers more than he cares to confess to," said one of the doctors, speaking to a medical friend in confidence one day.

"Yes; I fully agree with you, my friend; I never had a case to puzzle me so. His eyes sometimes wear a look that I have never seen in those of anyone who was not fully conscious. When he surprises me looking at him, he drops his eyes in evident confusion; had he any object in deceiving us thus, I should say he was shamming," replied the other, a gruff old gentleman who had attended Walter Greyson for nearly twenty years.

This conversation occurred in the reading-room of a fashionable hotel one Sunday afternoon, and another besides the two physicians overheard the whispered comments.

Henry Barton had strolled in, and was apparently deeply interested in the contents of the newspaper he held before his face.

He was seated only a few feet distant from where the doctor sat, and consequently heard all.

His dark face paled, and a look of absolute fear crept into his glowing eyes.

"God! I too have noticed the strangeness of my uncle's manner; what if he indeed be shamming, as they say; what if after all my hopes should be vain. I have been drawing immense sums in his name, and with my usual cursed luck losing them at the gaming table. Should he discover this, and also my connection with the Rose Michel affair, I would be ruined irretrievably; should his pretended imbecility be a scheme to test my worthiness, Heaven help me, I would indeed be lost, and ruin now means actual beggary, absolute poverty to myself and my darling Clarice."

"No, no, it must not be; rather than this I would end his days. Should he indeed be in possession of his reason he would immediately institute a search for Rose Michel, and when found he will make her his heiress. He must not find her. I must watch him closely; I must know the truth at once."

Musing thus, Barton hurried away from the hotel, turning his steps in the direction of his uncle's residence.

We will precede him, and, with the privilege of an author, enter Walter Greyson's chamber, where we find him in company with his servant Paul, with whom he is talking in low, guarded tones. He is changed greatly, thin and pale, and worn-looking, with an abundance of silver-threads among the dark clustering locks around his forehead and in the heavy mustache shading his proudly curved lips.

He is leaning wearily back among the satin cushions in his easy chair, but his eyes are fixed with intense earnestness on the face of Paul, to whom he is speaking.

"Are you sure, Paul, that your affection for me, and your desire to serve me has not led you to judge my nephew wrongly? 'Tis true he is base and hollow to the heart's core, but I can scarcely realize that one in whose veins my blood runs, can be guilty of such a crime as you lay to his door. You heard him—say—exulting over the fact that Rose Michel was in his power, you told me this when I first regained my senses, and warned me, if I would discover his villainy, still to pretend utter unconsciousness. I have done so, but have been able to discover nothing of Rose Michel's whereabouts. You heard him mention the cot in the woods. You went there, did you not, and found it burned to the ground; where, then, in heaven's name is Rose, the girl whom I would give half my fortune to find? When I allow myself to think that there may have been foul play on his part, that he whom you accuse of robbing me of the jeweled locket that contained her history, may have removed her from his path forever, my heart grows sick within me. Oh, God! if it should indeed be so! I can scarcely refrain from springing upon him, when he is in my sight, and demanding her at his hands. Oh, Henry, Henry, your mother, my poor Aileen, would rise from her grave to chide you, could she know the heart pangs you have cost me."

The speaker's head fell forward on his breast and the great tears rolled down his pale cheeks as his memory went back to the dead years of the past when Aileen Greyson, his queenly sister, with her royally beautiful face and jetty lustrous eyes, had made him the slave of her imperious will, sometimes petting and caressing him, at others chilling him with her haughty pride.

She had been the elder sister, while little Laura, the blue-eyed, golden-haired pet of them all, was the youngest born.

Aileen married one Herbert Barton, who was supposed to be immensely wealthy. He turned out to be a gambler and a rascal, and at the end of the first year after his marriage was shot in a fashionable gambling hell.

The disgrace broke his wife's proud heart, and a few months later she was laid by his side, after consigning, with her latest breath, her orphan baby-boy to her brother's care.

Walter Greyson had been true to his trust. Aileen's boy was brought up as a son of his own, and nothing that wealth could purchase was ever denied him.

What wonder the fond uncle's heart should almost break when the knowledge of his nephew's base ingratitude first dawned upon him.

For nearly an hour after the passionate outburst which he had allowed to escape him uncontrolled, Walter Greyson sat silent, allowing his mind to dwell on old-time memories, that were best forgotten.

At last he arose, and startled Paul by the sudden exclamation:

"Paul, help me to dress, I am going to walk out to-day, the fresh air will cool my brain, for it seems a-fire."

"Alone, Mr. Greyson?" the man cried in extreme surprise.

"Yes, alone, I am fully capable of taking care of myself," he replied, with something of impatience in his tone, and, without another word, hurried from the house, turning his steps in the direction of the hills, under whose gloomy shadow rested the miserable habitation Rose Michel had once called home.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RIVALS.

"Oh, Mother Earth! upon thy lap,
Thy weary ones receiving,
And o'er them, silent as a dream
Thy grassy mantle weaving,
Fold softly, in thy long embrace,
That heart so worn and broken,
And cool its pulse of fire beneath
Thy shadows old and oaken."

SOME weeks previous to the day of which I have written—that on which Mr. Greyson held the interview with his servant recorded in the last chapter—Henry Barton, while riding out on some important business connected with the firm, met with a startling adventure. It was early morning, and he rode hard, desiring to be back to the factory by opening time. His horse was a very spirited animal, impatient of the curb and often balky. As Barton was not in good humor himself, the animal's restive movements angered him and he used his spurs rather too freely. The horse became unmanageable, and bounded over the road with terrific speed. Barton was not a good rider, and his heart grew sick with an awful horror; how long could he hold on, how long keep his seat on the back of the flying animal. He called aloud for help as he dashed past the few persons he met abroad thus early, but everyone valued his life too highly to sacrifice it for another's sake.

This was on the morning of Archie Wallace's departure for Boston, and as fate would have it, Archie Wallace was the first to see Barton's danger. The man's haggard and ghastly face first attracted his attention, and on the moment he attributed its pallor to a different cause, but in the next he saw that the horse was beyond his control.

"My God! the mad animal is making direct for the road that leads to the lime kiln; Barton will be killed," he whispered, hoarsely, darting across the road with the intention of heading off the horse before it was too late.

On, on, he dashed toward the place of peril, throwing his little bundle from him that even its weight might not impede his progress, with the horse almost abreast of him, flying along the road with lightning-like speed, panting and almost breathless, on, on, toward the steaming, seething lime kiln.

At length by an effort that was almost superhuman he distanced the horse a few paces, and turning, flung his coat directly in the face of the enraged animal, who reared and plunged and staggered backward; and on the instant Wallace dragged the half senseless rider from the saddle, and gave the infuriated brute rein.

He was off like a whirlwind, and Barton lay panting and breathless in the arms of his "poor rival," as he had often termed Archie Wallace. He revived after a momentary weakness and sprang to his feet, his face ashen white and his chest heaving convulsively.

"Archie Wallace," he hissed between his clenched teeth, "I would rather have died than that you should have saved me. I owe you a debt of hate that I have sworn to repay. Why did you come between me and the death that would have been sweeter a thousand times than life at your hands. Since you have laid me under such an un-

welcome obligation receive this as your reward, for I have no doubt your action was prompted by the hope of remuneration."

As he spoke, Henry Barton threw a purse at the feet of the man who had been his deliverer in the hour of peril.

Wallace's fair, frank face flushed hotly, and an angry light gathered in his clear hazel eyes. He spurned the pocket-book with his foot, and in a voice of supreme contempt, exclaimed:

"Keep your money, Henry Barton; the day may come, unlikely as it now appears, when you will need it as much as ever I have done. As for your hatred, I am utterly indifferent to your feelings toward me. I saved you, as I would have rescued my bitterest enemy, from a feeling of humanity. I never accept pay for doing my simple duty. Poor I may be all my days, but I am scarcely mean enough for that. You have striven hard to wound me by your insults, but you have scarcely succeeded. I leave your conduct to the feeling of the disappointment which the little affair I interrupted so unexpectedly has caused you."

With these words he turned his back on Barton and walked hastily back toward the spot where he had left his little bundle, while Barton stood still where he had left him, white to the very lips and quivering with passion.

The quiet, contemptuous look written so plainly on the face of the engineer had almost maddened him. He longed to spring at the man and fell him to the ground, but the memory of their last meeting restrained him, and true to his cowardly nature he controlled his wrath.

His heart knew not one feeling of gratitude toward the man who had perhaps saved him from a horrible death, and as he turned his face in the direction Wallace had taken, he shook his fist after the retreating form and muttered:

"Wait, wait, my proud pauper, it is your turn now, mine is yet to come."

He hurried along the road with his eyes bent upon the ground, and presently he stooped and picked up a yellow piece of pasteboard.

It was Archie's railroad ticket for Boston, which he had dropped from his pocket as he flew along the road.

"Ha, ha! so that is your destination, my fine fellow, perhaps that is where Rose Michel is hidden. By Heaven, I too will take a trip to Boston this morning. While you are purchasing another ticket I will telegraph to the foreman of my floor, and if fate favors me, I will accompany you unseen on your journey, and follow you to your destination. Day after day I have searched for the girl whose whereabouts you alone know. Now my search may prove fruitful of good results."

The thoughts and hopes the finding of the railway ticket had awakened in his breast seemed to have given him new life.

He made his way with incredible speed to the depot, going a different way from that which Wallace had taken, and reaching it first.

It was the work of a second to despatch a telegram, and he was already seated in the cars when Archie Wallace, tired and dusty, arrived at the station, and as chance would have it entered the same car, and threw himself into a seat with his back to his enemy.

The journey to Boston was not a long one, and Wallace's mind was too busily occupied with hopes and plans for the future, to admit of his taking much notice of his fellow passengers.

Rose's face, as he had seen it last, was constantly before his view. That sweet, flower-like face, the blue, lustrous eyes shining up at him through a mist of tears, the tender, tremulous lips upheld to receive his parting kiss, and the gold-bright hair sweeping softly against his cheek.

His heart thrilled with a passionate rapture that was new to it, and his dull, toilsome life seemed suddenly to have become flooded with sunshine.

How different to his were the thoughts of the man who sat only a few feet from him, with hat drawn close down over his eyes, and coat buttoned up to his chin; they too were of Rose Michel, but ah, what wicked, vengeful thoughts.

The passion he had felt for her had vanished, drowned in the hatred which her scorn of him had awakened, and in his heart of hearts, he vowed to

make her suffer, should fate ever throw her in his path.

"Death itself would be preferable to a life spent with him," she had said, and he smiled at the recollection.

The more she hated him the greater would be his conquest, he reasoned, and at that moment would have given ten years of his life to have her again in his power.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOME AGAIN.

WHEN the morning sun shone bright into the narrow windows of the room that had been Archie Wallace's home Rose Michel still knelt in all the abandonment of grief before the corpse of the aged woman who had been her true friend.

She could not collect her scattered thoughts; she was confused and bewildered, and her aching, tearless eyes searched the poor dead face wildly, as if seeking the comforting, cheery smile that had never been denied her in life.

The knock of a neighbor upon the door aroused her from the stupor of despair into which she was fast sinking, and she started to her feet with a low cry.

Her sweet young face was rigid as that of the dead, and every nerve was drawn tense as steel when she threw open the door, and pointed toward the silent figure in the chair, without a word.

Alarmed by the strangeness of her look, the neighbor woman advanced into the room, and bent for an instant over the occupant of the leathern chair.

A loud cry of horror broke from her lips as she discovered the truth, and she staggered back to where Rose stood, pale and trembling.

"My God! when did this happen? Poor child, poor frightened child, what are you going to do?"

"What am I going to do? Great Heaven, what am I going to do?" Rose wailed, and ere the woman had time to catch her, threw up her arms and fell heavily upon the floor.

The swoon was long protracted, and when at last the kindly efforts of sympathizing neighbors had the desired effect, and she once more awoke to a sense of her lonely position, a coroner had been summoned to hold an inquest on the body of poor old Mrs. Wallace.

The coroner's jury arrived at the conclusion that death was the result of an affection of the heart, from which the deceased had long suffered—and their duty was done.

During the progress of the inquest, a sudden thought had come to Rose. She had never entered the old cottage that had been her home since her father's death; indeed she had left the rooms of Mrs. Wallace very seldom, her injured feet being still very painful to walk upon.

There was another reason why she kept indoors, and that was an unaccountable terror of Henry Barton. She feared him, and never, unless accompanied by Archie, could she be persuaded to risk the chance of meeting him upon the street.

But in this hour, when the mother of him she loved with all the fervor of her tender nature, lay uncoffined before her, with no money but that which might be given in charity, with which to bury her, Rose forgot her fears for her own safety, and remembering that her poor father had clung through all his hardships and poverty to the little golden locket containing her mother's picture, she resolved to search for it in the deserted cottage, and, if possible, sell it to defray the funeral expenses of her dear old friend.

That it had been found by those who removed his remains, never occurred to her, for she knew he had been in the habit of keeping it in a chink in the wall, near the head of his bed, where he could easily reach it by stretching forth his hand, whenever he desired to gaze on the sweet pictured face of his lost wife.

Rose had learned from Archie, how her father had been buried, and also that the name D'Orme had been added to that of Michel upon the plate of the magnificent coffin.

She had at once concluded that the report circulated was indeed true—that her poor father had in younger days been a friend to Walter Greyson—and in the midst of her own suffering and

distress, her heart had swelled with pride to think that her beloved father had been buried with the honor due his rank.

Rose had been brought up in ignorance of the name of her mother's relatives, and consequently had no suspicion of the truth.

She was very grateful to Mr. Greyson, despite his harshness to her in the past and his relationship to the man whom of all the world she most hated and feared.

Leaving the kindly neighbor who had been the first to discover Mrs. Wallace's death, alone with the remains, Rose wrapped her shawl about her shoulders, and with eyes almost blinded by tears, covered her bright hair with the little warm hood Mrs. Wallace's deft fingers had fashioned.

"Dear old friend! Heaven grant my mission be not fruitless," she sobbed, dropping a kiss on the marble brow, as she hurried from the chamber of death.

The way to the ruined cot on the hillside was long and the day was bitterly cold, but having no money in her possession Rose had no means of riding.

She almost ran through the busy streets, in her breathless haste, casting quick, apprehensive glances behind and around her, now and then, as if fearing pursuit.

Many a curious eye followed the little flying figure, with its white sweet face, and blue, dilated eyes. She was near, very near, to the hills under whose shadow lay her old home, ere she slackened her rapid pace. Then the memories of the past came crowding thick and fast upon her, and vividly before her arose the picture of the white-haired old father, lying with his sightless eyes turned to the wall, while his weeping child toiled through the deep snow to plead for the loan of a few articles of groceries, only the few meager articles of provisions necessary to keep body and soul together.

She remembered the pangs that had rent her heart when she had been refused this loan, and was obliged to part with her mother's cherished wedding ring.

Again the hot tears rose to her burning, aching eyes, and with her golden head drooped forward on her breast she continued on her way.

The lonely cottage was reached at last, and somewhat to her surprise Rose found the door wide open. She could scarcely see for the tears which blinded her, and in the dead stillness reigning about the place she imagined she could hear the wild throbbing of her own heart.

The sight of the old familiar place recalled a thousand buried memories, and she uttered a passionate cry of pain as she entered the humble room in which both her beloved parents had died.

"Father! father! oh, my dear father!" she cried aloud, springing to the bedside without casting one glance around her, and throwing herself on her knees before it, weeping hysterically.

The bed was just as when he had been taken from it, not a thing in the room had been changed. The wooden chair still stood where she had left it, with a piece of molded toast on a saucer and a bowl of blue-molded tea upon it.

For some moments the orphan girl knelt, sobbing bitterly, with her face hidden in the bed-clothes, and at times moaning pitifully like one in mortal anguish.

"My poor father, why should I grieve for him? he is happier than I—oh, papa, my darling! my darling papa! you are with mamma in a land all bright and beautiful. Oh, why did you leave me alone? why did you not take me with you? why do you not ask the mighty King, at whose throne you kneel to-day, to call your suffering child to his breast?"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MEETING.

THERE came no answer to the poor child's passionate cry, and rising slowly to her feet she pushed the cot bed out from the wall, and ran her fingers through a narrow aperture in the wall behind it. A death-like pallor settled slowly over her fair young face, and with a low, gasping cry she sank down upon the bedside, crying aloud:

"It is gone! it is gone! Heaven pity me, my last hope has fled."

"My child! my poor child! what is gone?" asked a trembling voice at her elbow, and looking up quickly Rose Michel's eyes fell full upon the face of Walter Greyson. She sprang to her feet out of the reach of his hand, and on the impulse of the moment exclaimed angrily:

"Why are you here, Mr. Greyson, do you come to mock my misery? if so, you must surely be satisfied."

A look of infinite pain flitted for a moment over Mr. Greyson's face, and his eyes dropped beneath her steady gaze. The memory of his kindness and the thought of what he had done for her dear dead father quickly recurred to her, and hiding her face in very shame, she whispered:

"Forgive me, Mr. Greyson, I scarcely know what I am saying or doing. I have suffered so, and the sight of the empty bed almost maddened me. I have never entered this room until now since he was carried from it, and by your kindness, buried respectfully. Oh, how shall I thank you, how ever repay the debt of gratitude I owe you. Do not think harshly of my impudent words. I was not myself when I uttered them."

Again the girl was sobbing wildly, with her passionate face buried in the pillow upon which her father's head had laid.

Walter Greyson opened his arms as if to take her to his breast, but quickly restraining the impulse, said softly:

"What are you looking for, child? what was it that agitated you so?"

Rose looked up quickly.

"I was looking for a small golden locket, the only fortune my father had to leave me; it is not in its accustomed place and the discovery almost killed me, it was such a disappointment, and for a moment I could not control my agitation; my last hope died, my heart seemed breaking."

Her answer was given in that low, calm voice indicative of settled despair.

For a moment Walter Greyson did not speak. He was scarcely prepared to acknowledge his relationship then and there and consequently must be on his guard. His heart yearned to clasp the lonely orphan girl in his arms, but the time was not yet come when he could do so. She was so like his sister, his loved and lost one, his beautiful Laurie, that he wondered he had not noticed it more particularly on the night she had pleaded with him for simple justice, the remarkable resemblance between them. As he could not yet acknowledge his claim he attempted to hide his real feelings beneath a mask of assumed haughtiness, and in a tone but very little different from that in which he had addressed her on the night on which our story opened, he said, quietly:

"Rose Michel, could your parents from their home on high lend an ear to our words this day they would confide your future to my keeping without a fear for your welfare. You are young, beautiful and utterly alone in the world, insensible to its wickedness, ignorant of its vices. If you will trust yourself into my keeping you shall be as my cherished daughter, loved, petted and caressed, your every wish anticipated, your every desire readily granted. Come with me, child, you shall never more know the meaning of the words poverty and woe."

He had advanced nearer to her as he spoke, letting his hand fall gently on her bowed, golden head and attempting to raise her from her knees, upon which she had again fallen in the extremity of her grief.

The touch of his hands seemed to arouse all the pride of her race, and her blue eyes were bright with an indignant light when, with a startled cry, she sprang to her feet and confronted him, saying excitedly:

"Mr. Greyson, once before I refused your charity when I was in sore need of money to purchase the food that was necessary to sustain life. Then too my father lay dying, pining for the comforts I was forced to deny him. He is dead now, and I can fight my battle with the world alone, unaided by your charity. If I were fallen so low that I be driven to beg my bread from door to door, you would be the last to whom I would apply; your nephew has wronged me, basely, cruelly, and one whose blood flows through his veins I will shun till the end."

"Till the end, girl; do you know what the end

would be if you persisted in this empty pride? I will enlighten you. You are young, beautiful, lovable; in whatever station of life you move, you will have lovers—or they who call themselves lovers—they will flatter and caress you, and you, tired with the unthankful struggle to earn your bread by the toil of your hands will yield at last, won by the promise of a life all brightness and color, you will leave your toilsome druggery and the end will be—what?"

The girl had listened to his words like one in a dream; at its conclusion the drooped head was haughtily upraised; the blue, pure eyes met his own fearlessly, full of repressed passion and unspoken scorn.

And her voice thrilled with a vague pain, as she replied:

"You mean to say that at last I would be what your nephew would have made me, a second Camille, gay, reckless, desperate, the sport of every tongue, a woman of the world, 'loved by those whose vanity she gratified, despised by those who should have pitied her.' Those were Camille's very words, were they not, Mr. Greyson? Think you they will ever be mine?"

There was a look of conscious innocence and dauntless defiance in her pure young face that thrilled the heart of the man whom she addressed, and with difficulty restraining the desire which prompted him to take her to his heart, he replied:

"No! Rose Michel, you will never be a Camille, I could stake my hopes of Heaven on that; where are you going?"—for she was moving slowly toward the door—"come back my child, here is some money that is rightfully yours. I found the diamond gemmed locket in your dead father's hand. It was worth, I should imagine, about five hundred dollars, here are bills to the amount, take it and let me keep the locket until such time as you can repurchase it from me. I am giving you nothing but its market value, do not hesitate to accept its price from my hands. My nephew's cruelty shall be visited on his own head. I have been deceived in him, oh, Heaven! how cruelly deceived! why should you condemn me for his faults?"

The proud head fell forward on his clasped arms, leaned upon the low wooden mantel, and Walter Greyson's chest heaved with emotion.

Rose's little hand fell like a white dove on her shoulder, and her sweet blue eyes from which all the angry light had fled, grew moist with the tears that would not be restrained.

"Mr. Greyson, pardon me, pride and poverty are but sorry companions. I will sell you my dead mother's locket, accepting gladly your price for it. I do not condemn you for Henry Barton's faults, but my heart shrank from the thought of receiving a favor from one so nearly related to him. Forgive me if you can, and think gently of her who is your old friend's child."

Walter Greyson looked down, with his heart in his eyes, on the beautiful young face, so pale and wan, forcing back the words of tenderness that struggled for utterance, the words of love he would have spoken to his dead Laura's child. He took her hand in his, pressed it to his lips, and leaving a roll of bank-notes in it—left her alone.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AMONG THE GRAVES

ROSE looked after his retreating form in amazement, puzzled to interpret aright the look in his eyes, and the tenderness of his voice when he had last addressed her.

She was alone in the deserted cottage that had been her home, and in her hand held more money than she had ever dreamed of possessing. Mrs. Wallace, her dear old friend, need not now be laid in pauper ground. This was the thought that filled her heart with joy, and with one last lingering glance around the lonely room, she wrapped her shawl close about her shoulders and hurried out again into the frosty air, turning her face in the direction that led to the place where only a dead woman awaited her. Her heart was full of newborn hopes, and but for the dread uncertainty that hung like a pall over Archie Wallace's fate, she would have been almost happy.

"I could advertise for the position of governess," she mused; "I am surely capable of teaching young children; after all, life may not be all as dark and dreary as I have found it heretofore, there may be brighter days in store."

"But oh, Archie! Archie! where in the wide world are you to-day. Not dead! not dead! my heart would tell me if you were. Something is wrong I know, you would not forget us, your own dear mother and I, if you were able to hold a pen you would write to us. I will go to Boston, I will search for you to satisfy my heart that all is well, but since you have chosen to keep silent, if I find that you have done so wilfully, I will never see your face again."

Musing thus, with her heart full of conflicting emotions, Rose hurried back to Mrs. Wallace's residence, first stopping at an undertaker's, and giving orders for a respectable funeral.

The neighbors, who had anxiously awaited her return, met her with looks of surprise not unmixed with suspicion. How had she obtained the money which she dealt out with a lavish hand?

Whispers, that would have called the blood to her cheeks could she have heard them, passed from lip to lip, and many a pitying glance followed the fairy-like form of Rose, as she flitted about the remains of her old friend, performing little offices of love, smoothing the snowy hair back from the marble brow, folding the tired hands over the pulseless breast, and filling them with flowers worth almost their weight in gold, bought from a hot-house near.

It was a labor she delighted in, a labor of love, and utterly unconscious of the suspicion she had aroused, Rose sat all night beside the coffin, sometimes building plans for the future, musing on the strangeness of her meeting Walter Greyson, and again weeping softly to think that the cold form before her must be laid away in the cold grave, ere Archie had bidden a last farewell.

On the morrow the body of Marion Wallace was laid away to rest, and Rose, as chief mourner, followed it to the grave.

She lingered long in the lonely spot where they had laid her, between the graves of her lost Jessie and sweet Minnie Deane.

There was something in the peaceful spot that had a strange charm for her. It was so quiet, and she was so weary, so tired of the struggle for life that she longed to lay her head down under the pure white mantle of the snow, and sleep peacefully, dreamlessly, with no regrets for the past or fears for the future.

Ah, Minnie! little friend, you would not change places with me to-day, would you? You are silent, you cannot answer, darling. Oh, why must the dead be ever mute; why can they not burst the bonds that hold them from the loved ones who call vainly upon their names? Minnie! Mother! dear ones, how can you sleep so peacefully, leaving me here all alone to mourn your loss?"

Rose had thrown herself, sobbing hysterically, on Minnie Deane's grave.

The passionate outburst of grief relieved her, and she arose, comforted and refreshed, for the memory of the divine words the minister had read over her old friend's coffin came to her like an inspiration, "Come to me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

A heartfelt prayer arose to her lips, the pure young heart was raised to the throne of grace, she had asked comfort from a source that never yet had failed her.

Dashing the tears from her eyes, she turned away from the new-made graves, and was wending her way back to the lonely room where she intended to remain until she found employment of some kind.

She was not yet out of the graveyard, when a small boy came running toward her, with a sealed letter or note in his hand.

"Be yer name Miss Rose Mick-shell, lady?" he panted breathlessly, holding the note behind his back as if fearing she would take it from him by main force.

"My name is Rose Michel, child; what can you want of me?" she cried, a grayish pallor overspreading her face, and her hand going up involuntarily to her heart, whose throbbing she could plainly hear.

She had thrown back the heavy crape veil from her face, and the boy was gazing in open-mouthed admiration upon her, and holding out the note he had drawn from behind him while she spoke. She tore open the envelope with trembling fingers and hastily perused the few lines it contained:

"ROSE MICHEL: If you would see Archibald Wallace alive, follow bearer at once to the place where he lies. He calls constantly upon your name."

This was all, these few brief lines, written in a scrawly, irregular hand, and without signature, yet it was enough to wring a cry of bitter anguish from the heart of her who read it.

"Go; I will follow you," she said hoarsely, and the boy led the way—to what?

CHAPTER XXVII.

FOUL PLAY.

You speak to me thus while your pulses are leaping
With the maddening warmth of a passion that kills,
While conscience is silent and Reason is sleeping
And the subtle tongue speaks what impurity wills.
If you had a rich jewel, say, would you impair it,
By purposely soiling its beauty so bright?
Nay, would it not rather delight you to wear it
With not a ray from its dazzling light.
—FRANCIS S. SMITH.

ROSE hurried along after her little guide, her sweet violet eyes full of silent agony, and a gray rigid pallor on her face, while from her parted lips came the anguished cry of a woman's love, infinitely tender; exquisitely sad.

"Archie! Archie! Oh, God, if I should be too late—hurry, hurry, boy! why do you creep along like a snail, while he is dying?"

She was urging the boy to greater speed, notwithstanding the fact that she was obliged to run to keep pace with him.

The little urchin grinned all over his dirty face but made no answer. On, on, he led her, along a lonely road that led out of the town, and breathless and panting with fatigue and exhaustion she followed him, fleeing along like a spirit of the night, in her black robes and flowing crape veil.

"We'll soon be there, miss," exclaimed the boy, as they came to a turn in the road, where a close carriage was drawn up by the roadside.

Rose glanced around her in sudden horror. There was no house in sight, only the bleak and lonely road, bordered by leafless trees with ice-covered boughs.

"Where are you leading me," she cried, a sudden suspicion flashing across her brain.

The boy had no time to answer, for at this moment a man sprang out of the carriage and approached her, and with a thrill of unutterable horror she recognized her enemy, Henry Barton.

Like a hunted deer she turned to fly, but his hand upon her arm detained her; and his low, mocking laugh fell like a knell of death upon her ear.

He had tossed a bill to the boy who had guided her into the snare, and dismissed him with an imperative wave of the hand.

"Now, my beauty, I will attend you to the carriage, 'tis useless to struggle, your brawny lover will not this time come to the rescue, I have provided for that emergency. You will, I know, forgive the little stratagem I used to lure you to my side, remembering that all stratagems are fair in love and war."

He was attempting to draw her toward the carriage as he spoke, but with a strength born of despair she wrenched herself free from his hand's detested touch, and flew away from his side like a bird let loose from a cage.

Barton laughed loudly at her futile attempt to escape him, and forced her almost rudely to enter the waiting vehicle. The driver was evidently posted as to his directions, for Barton sprang into the carriage after Rose, while the man on the box cracked his whip, and started the horses at a brisk gallop.

Rose was almost senseless with extreme terror. She was not naturally of a timid disposition, but she had endured so much lately, that her dauntless spirit seemed crushed and broken.

She lay back among the carriage cushions,

ghastly pale, her great blue eyes widely dilated, and her breath coming in panting gasps.

She was beautiful always, rarely beautiful, but to-day as Henry Barton's eyes roamed over the lily-white face, something of the passion he had thought dead forever stirred in his heart, and his pulses leaped madly with the fire of a lawless love.

Never to him had she appeared so exquisitely fair. The soft black, crape-trimmed robes she wore enhanced the wondrous purity of her complexion, and were such an improvement on the faded calico gown she had been wont to wear.

He knew from whence the money came with which she had purchased them, for when he visited his uncle's home, on the day previous to that of which we write, and found that the supposed imbecile had gone out for a walk, some impulse, which he could not account for, led him to turn his face in the direction of the cottage that had been the home of Julian Michel D'Orme.

He had arrived in time to see Rose enter its lowly door, and crouching below the low window he had heard every word of the conversation recorded in a previous chapter.

His heart had sickened with a horrible fear when he thought Walter Greyson was about to acknowledge the girl's claims.

He had cursed Rose Michel in his heart for exposing to his uncle what little she did know of his villainy, and swore to follow her like a shadow until he had her again in his power.

He was now fully satisfied that his uncle was indeed playing a part; that he was not, as he had all along pretended, forgetful of the past. Barton congratulated himself on having learned the truth thus early, for he could now change his tactics, and by his gentleness and pretended affection for the unsuspecting man, win back the love which he had once inspired. He shadowed the girl's footsteps to the door of Archie Wallace's home, chancing to learn from the idle gossip of a group of tenants gathered near that old Mrs. Wallace was dead, and how deeply the girl, Rose, mourned her loss.

He knew that at such a time there would be no chance of decoying her away and waited impatiently for the morrow.

Leaving his duties in the factory in charge of the assistant floor-manager, he loitered round the house until the funeral left it, and then, hiring from a man who would have given his soul for the gold that was his idol, a close carriage, he drove into the lonely road above referred to, and despatched a messenger—the coach driver's son—to deliver the false note to Rose Michel in the graveyard, where he knew she would be at the time.

His plan had succeeded well, and his heart thrilled with rapture as he studied the lovely pallid face opposite him, and the wide, dilated, fear-haunted eyes. Now, indeed, his time had come.

He must bind her to him by a chain that could not be broken, for he knew all hopes of inheriting his uncle's fortune were dead, and only as the husband of Rose Michel could he ever expect to succeed to it. He would have given much to have won her consent to the union by fair means, but he knew that there was no possibility of her looking kindly on him.

The thought enraged him beyond endurance, and catching her madly to his heart, he dared to press passionate kisses on her pure lips.

She struggled wildly to release herself from his fearful embrace, but what availed her feeble efforts against his brute strength.

She was entirely in his power, a helpless, innocent girl who had never harmed him, and yet there was no feeling of compassion in his evil heart.

"Rose, Rose, forgive me! I have no wish to harm you, but I love you so, pretty one. Will you give up this useless fighting with fate and be my own, my wife, Rose Michel, the honored mistress of my home?"

He had released the girl from his arms as he spoke, and she sprung to her feet, trying wildly to dash open the door of the coach; but all in vain, they were too well secured.

Finding herself indeed a prisoner, she turned on Barton with a look on her face that daunted

him. It was dark with desperation and despair, and the wild blue eyes seemed to emit sparks of fire, while the slender, willowy form, drawn to its fullest height, seemed to tower above him like an avenging angel.

"You lie, Henry Barton, when you say you love me. You are my bitterest enemy; you are a coward and a libertine, and helpless as I am, and at your mercy, I have still the courage to defy you. The God of the orphan will not surely allow you to succeed in your hellish designs. No man who really loved a woman would be cruel to her as you have been to me. You say you are willing to make me your wife; I would rather die a death of keenest torture than stand with you before the altar, and breathe vows that would be false as God is true. I fear you no longer, there is no room in my heart for anything but immeasurable contempt. Do your worst, you can but kill me, and death were kinder than life with you; not to save that life, that is but a sorry boon, would I be yours."

The girl's voice quivered with the passionate scorn that fired her heart, and for a moment they faced each other—

He, flushed and confused—she, pallid and grave—The master bowed at the glance of the slave.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN PERIL.

ROSE MICHEL's words had for a moment aroused in Barton's heart a feeling of shame, and his eyes dropped beneath her unfaltering gaze, but not for long would he let conscience keep the mastery.

As if angry at his momentary weakness, he again caught her arm in a rude grasp, and forcing her to a seat beside him hissed into her ear

"Girl, you tell me you would not be mine for your life's sake; would you consent to save a life ten thousand times dearer to you than your own—the precious life of your gallant Scotch lover? Ay, you start and turn ghastly pale—where now is your defiance? where your boasted scorn?"

The mention of Archie's name, with the threat of menaced danger to him which Barton's tone implied, seemed to chill the very blood in Rose's veins.

A thousand thoughts rushed madly through her tortured brain. What was she to think? Archie had made a deadly enemy of Barton by the blow which he had given him in her defense. Was he not also Barton's rival?

What meant his long silence? Surely she had arrived at a solution of the mystery at last—Barton had something to do with his disappearance; what if—she drove back the horrible thought which arose before her like some horrible dream phantasy. With a feeling of unutterable horror she regarded the man who was perhaps her lover's murderer.

She tried to speak, but her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth, and only a low inarticulate cry came from her parted lips. Barton exulted in the fears he had aroused, and saw through her love for Archie Wallace a way to win her consent to a union with himself. The carriage was still flying over the level country road, the clattering of its glass windows making a rattle that almost drowned his voice when once again he spoke, this time in a tone of conscious power.

"Ah! my Lady Rose, you who profess to love this Wallace so well, will doubtless do much to save him from disgrace and ruin. You will even sacrifice your happiness, I should imagine, by the loving tone of some of the many letters you delighted in penning to him, some of which I carry at this moment in my pocket."

"My letters to Archie Wallace in your pocket?"

The words broke involuntarily from the poor girl's parched lips, and her anguished face was raised to his, white with the wild despair of her heart.

"Yes! your letters to him in my pocket; and, what is better still, himself in my power—his honor, and his very life, I may say, in my hands to do with them as I will. Ah, Rose Michel, think you I would rest until I paid him the debt I owed him? You alone, of all the world, can save him from disgrace and dishonor, for, on the conditions which I will name to you, he shall be

leased from the prison cell where for weeks he has been confined, chafing like a caged lion against the fate which doomed him to be shut away from the world and the girl of his love."

Rose's wild eyes flashed on him a look of immeasurable scorn, and her clear voice never faltered, as, dropping her hands from their convulsive pressure on her heart, she answered him:

"Now you are lying again, Henry Barton; had you told me he was dead, dead by your own hand, I would have believed you, but knowing Archie Wallace's loyal nature, I would stake my soul's salvation on his innocence of any crime that would condemn him to the law's punishment. You have manufactured this story to frighten me into compliance with your wishes, but your plans will not succeed. You shall not conquer."

Barton laughed loudly, and while she spoke drew a folded piece of paper from his pocket-book. When she paused he handed it to her nonchalantly, with the quietly spoken remark:

"Since you doubt my word, Queen Rose, please cast your eye over this paragraph, which you could not possibly have missed had you read the Boston papers regularly since your lover left you."

Rose snatched the paper from his hand, with the old look of terror deepening in her limpid violet eyes, and in a second had mastered its contents.

It read as follows, and was headed:

"DARING SAFE ROBBERY."

"Early on Tuesday morning the patent iron safe belonging to the firm of Osgood & Miller was discovered, by one of the above-named gentlemen, open and rifled of its entire contents—gold and notes to the amount of \$20,000. Suspicion was attached to an old porter, who was known to be a miser, but, strange to say, he was proved to be innocent. By a lucky chance Mr. Henry Barton, a gentleman from Lowell, an intimate friend of the junior partner, happened to be passing the factory late on the previous night and testified to the fact of having seen the engineer employed in the building, Archibald Wallace by name, proceeding from the lower floor of the factory in a very suspicious manner.

"Wallace was at once searched, and, improbable as it may appear, he had the assurance to keep a large part of the stolen money upon his person, and sworn to by the owners. Messrs. Osgood & Miller could scarcely believe the evidences of their own senses, for although Wallace had only been a short time in the employ, they trusted him implicitly, believing him the soul of honor.

"The criminal solemnly protested his innocence, but proof is against him. He has no friend in Boston, and the woman in whose house he lodged swore that he had come home at the usual hour, but could not say that he had not gone out again.

"Mr. Barton's evidence, and that of the old porter who was first accused, and who swore to having seen Wallace examining the lock of the safe a day or two before, convicted Wallace immediately, and he now lies in the prison cell awaiting the verdict of the law."

Rose read the account through, without a word or sign, and at its conclusion raised her tearless, aching eyes, full of passionate pain, and her quivering lily-pale face, in all the bitterness of hopeless despair, to meet his triumphant glance fixed upon her steadily.

"I understand it all," she moaned. "You cannot deceive me. I know as well as you know in your guilty heart, that Archie Wallace is innocent of the crime laid to his door. I can understand your plot as well as if I were an actor in it. You and the porter, whose thirst for gold you gratified, whom you made your accomplice, are implicated in the robbery. It was a plan made by yourself to entrap an innocent man, for Archie Wallace is innocent as you are guilty."

Again the villain shrank from the pure, young creature who seemed striving to read his inmost thoughts and to penetrate the dark depths of his guilty heart, but he would not let her notice his discomfiture, and in a tone of calm composure replied:

"Even supposing your hastily arrived at conclusions to be correct, what are you going to do about it? What would your suspicions do to clear him?

would your words be taken—even supposing I allowed you out of my sight long enough to give utterance to them—a homeless, penniless girl, who has lived on his charity, under the shelter of his roof, would it not be natural that you should try to save him? Would the oath of one occupying such doubtful relations to the accused, be taken before that of a gentleman of my standing in society? Ah no, my pretty Rose, you can only hope to save him by submitting yourself to my guidance. When you are my wife his prison door shall be opened, and not before."

CHAPTER XXIX.

PLOTTINGS FOR THE DARK.

WE will now for a time return to our hero, Archie Wallace, whom we left on his journey to Boston, with a heart full of love for his gentle, blue-eyed Rose, and many fond hopes of future success and prosperity. He was loyal and true to the very heart's core, and such natures as his are always confiding and unsuspecting. Consequently, when among the passengers on their arrival at the Boston depot, he recognized Henry Barton's face, he was surprised, to be sure, but had no suspicion that the object which had brought him hither was to watch his own movements. He had enough to think of without giving the matter further consideration, and with his little bundle under his arm, he hastened to the factory where he was to be employed. As he had once shadowed the footsteps of Henry Barton, that gentleman now followed him, never losing sight of him until he disappeared inside the walls of Osgood & Miller's manufactory. A gleeful chuckle escaped Barton's lips when he read the name of the proprietors on the gilded sign above the entrance:

"OSGOOD & MILLER."

"Theodore Miller, my old college friend, I will pay you an unexpected visit to-day, my boy, and aside from the pleasure your company will give me, I will learn from you what I want to know concerning Rose Michel's lover. He is employed here, I have no doubt, and you can probably tell me whether or not he is married to the girl; and if she has preceded him hither. Great Heaven! if this should be the case I think I could murder the infernal Scotch hound without a moment's compunction. I would crush the life out of that athletic form of his, and laugh at her agony."

With such thoughts as these Barton waited until Wallace again emerged from the building, and then sought the presence of Theodore Miller, the junior partner of the wealthy firm.

He was a man of about Barton's age, pale, sickly, and effeminate-looking, with an abundance of yellowish hair, and large, restless, shifting blue eyes.

He greeted Barton with half-reluctant cordiality, and ushered him into his private office with the restless look deepening in his watery eyes.

"Why, Harry, the sight of your familiar face is really refreshing, I assure you; how is your wife and— Oh, I beg your pardon, your wife is dead."

"Exactly ten years," interrupted Barton, the calm, sarcastic tone of his voice grating harshly on Miller's ear. "What a wonderful retentive memory you have, Theo; I wonder if you have forgotten a certain little affair that occurred in our college days in which a pretty little dark-eyed fairy called Sadie Ray figured prominently—has your memory failed in that also?"

Theodore Miller's face had grown white as the winter's snow, and he was trembling like a leaf in a gale. He sprang from the chair, into which he had fallen, at Barton's first words, and grasped his arm convulsively, crying out in a low, hoarse voice:

"In the name of Heaven why do you remind me of this? What means your menacing looks and tone? You are speaking with a purpose, I know."

"I will tell you just what it means, Theodore Miller; it means that I know your secret. The girl Sadie is alive, and yet you have dared to wed the only daughter and heiress of Oscar Osgood,

What if I should breathe into your wealthy father-in-law's ear Sadie Ray's sad story?"

A groan of mortal terror burst from the ashen lips of Barton's listener, and he sank back into his chair like one suddenly bereft of strength.

"Great God!" he groaned, the cold sweat standing out in beads on his forehead. "Why do you wish to ruin me, Harry Barton? why have you kept my secret all these years, only to crush me to the earth at last? My God! what have I done to merit such treatment at your hands?"

Barton stood calmly by, contemplating the trembling, white-faced wretch before him, exulting in the misery he was causing, for the pure pleasure of seeing a fellow-being in pain, dealt out by his hand.

After a few moments of silence, broken only by the heavy breathing of the terror-stricken Miller, Barton spoke:

"Theo, you are certainly very courageous, I have not threatened to betray you, I was merely testing your memory. Your secret is safe as far as I am concerned—that is, providing you assist me in a little scheme of mine. Will you be willing to lend me your aid?"

Miller's haggard face brightened, and he sprang to his feet as if new life had been instilled into his frame.

"Yes, yes, Harry. When did I ever refuse you any help I could afford you? Command my services now as ever—speak, what would you have me do?"

Barton waved his hand impatiently, exclaiming:

"This is neither the time nor the place for such confidence. Meet me to-night at eight o'clock at my hotel—Parker's, you know, and we will there talk the matter over—by the way, Theo, who was that tall, broad-shouldered fellow who left the building just as I entered it; the one with the bundle under his arm?"

Miller looked up quickly, and his pale, blue eyes seemed to be searching his questioner's face as he answered:

"Why, that was our new engineer, Archibald Wallack, or Wallace, he called himself, and unless he deceived us grossly, he occupied the same position in your uncle's factory in Lowell only a few months ago. Strange that you should not have recognized him."

Barton laughed softly, but made no other answer, and with a few commonplace remarks they parted, Miller promising to be with him at the appointed hour.

Barton walked directly to the hotel, where he ordered a hearty meal, and settled himself in an easy chair before a glowing grate fire, where between smoking, reading and occasional potations from a cut glass decanter at his elbow he passed his time, until, just as the gilded clock on the mantel rang out the hour of eight, Theodore Miller was announced.

"My dear, Theo! you are punctual I must say," he cried, grasping his visitor's hand with affected cordiality, pushing him down into the seat from which he had just arisen, and drawing forward another for himself.

For nearly three hours they conversed in low, guarded tones, and when at last they parted Miller's fears for the safety of his secret had vanished.

"It is rather a risky undertaking Barton, and yet I think it will succeed. We can readily trust the job into old Graball's hands, for with such rich booty in his possession he will swear a hundred false oaths, if necessary, rather than relinquish it. The rest can be easily managed. I will bring you every letter that comes for him in our care, and carry out your orders to the letter."

These were Miller's parting words, spoken in a whisper as Barton was bidding him good-night.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE PRISONER.

THE plot which Barton and Miller had been concocting was one calculated to destroy the happiness of Archie Wallace, and bring dishonor on his name.

Only too well the plans they had formed succeeded.

Wallace won the esteem and respect of the senior partner, Mr. Osgood, and for a time all went well.

He hired cheap lodgings in a retired street, and for a few weeks Rose's letters came to him, like rays of Heaven's sunlight into his lonely toilsome life.

All through the long, wearying days the thought of the tiny white missive that would be waiting for him in his scantily-furnished garret-room, cheered his heart, and lightened his arduous labors.

At last he grew so impatient of the long delay that must intervene from the time he left his lodging in the morning till he returned at night, that he wrote to Rose, telling her to direct her letters to the factory, that they might sooner reach his eager hands.

After this one letter came, and then a long silence followed, and the little white messengers of hope and joy ceased altogether.

He wrote once, twice, and no answer came, and then a trouble greater than any he had ever known came upon him. He went to the factory at the usual time one morning, after a sleepless night passed in a thousand vague conjectures as to the cause of Rose's silence. She might be ill, dying, perhaps, and his mother out of consideration for his feelings be loth to send the sad tidings.

This was the thought that rose oftenest to his mind, and on the morning of which we write he entered the engine-room pale and worn-looking, and with the bluish circles under his eyes that betoken a sleepless night.

He had not yet started the machinery when the old porter—Graball he had been christened by the workmen on account of his grasping, miserly habits—came into the room in evident excitement, to summon Wallace to the office of Mr. Osgood.

There was a strange look on the old partner's face, and a stranger look in his round, bead-like eyes that the engineer did not notice, and just for an instant the old man looked after the towering form of Wallace as he walked away toward the door that led to the lower office; then hastily re-entering the engine-room, he glanced around him rapidly, his bleary old eyes brightening as they fell upon the coat which Wallace had just hung upon a peg behind the door.

Quick as lightning a roll of gold and a package of greenbacks were transferred from his own pocket to the inside breast pocket of the coat hanging behind the door, and with a gleeful chuckle old Graball stole unperceived from the spot.

Poor Archie, innocent and unconscious of the blow in store for him, entered Mr. Osgood's presence.

What then was his surprise to find himself touched on the arm by a policeman, and hear the ominous words—"Archibald Wallace, you are my prisoner!"

"Me, my friend? What have I done to merit this outrage?" he cried, shaking the officer's hand from his arm as if the touch were pollution, and turning his wondering hazel eyes from face to face.

Mr. Osgood shook his head, and his voice had more of regret than anger in it, when approaching the prisoner, he said:

"Do not try to brave it out. Wallace, you robbed my safe before daylight this morning. A gentleman saw you creep stealthily from the building, and is willing to swear to the fact. There is no use of—"

"Where is the gentleman who is my accuser?" interrupted Wallace, in clear, sonorous tones that rang through the silent room like the notes of the slogan among his native highland hills.

"He is here," replied the mild voice of Mr. Miller, and turning on his heels Archie Wallace stood face to face with Henry Barton.

For a moment not a word was spoken. Accuser and accused looked full into each other's eyes. The two faces would have made a study for a painter, the one, evil, crafty, exultant and sneering; the other noble and candid, but darkened now by the immeasurable scorn and contempt which Barton's villainy evoked.

"I might have known this was your work, Henry Barton," he said, quietly.

There was nothing in the words themselves, but there was that in the voice in which they were spoken that caused Mr. Osgood to glance sharply into Barton's face. It was turned partly from him, but he could see the dark red flush that had crept up to his very brow.

"By Heaven! if ever I saw guilt written on a human face, I see it in that of yonder gentleman," thought Osgood while the officer of the law prepared to do his duty and remove Wallace to prison.

"Leave your prisoner with me, I will be answerable for his safety, while you search his room; his address is in our books. Search his clothes and his person, and if no trace of the property stolen be found, he shall not be convicted on one person's evidence."

Mr. Osgood glanced full into Barton's face as he spoke, but the latter betrayed no sign of having understood the covert threat contained in the words.

Search was made accordingly in the poor place Wallace called his home, but no trace of the money was discovered.

The searchers found one thing in the garret-room that served to strengthen their suspicion. Wallace's bed had not been slept in during the previous night. The engine-room was next visited, and every place, probable and improbable, where a bank-note could be stowed away, was diligently searched.

They had almost given up the search, when opening the door suddenly one of the men knocked the coat, in which old Graball had hidden the money, down upon the floor.

The jingle of gold was heard as it fell, and a dozen hands were eagerly outstretched to grasp the garment. Out rolled the little package of gold and greenbacks, and in a few moments Archie Wallace was on his way, for the first time in his life, to a prison, loaded with disgrace, condemned and despised by the employer whose esteem he had striven so hard to retain, branded as a thief and separated by a barrier worse than death, from the aged mother who depended for bread to sustain life on the labor of his hands, and from the beautiful girl whom he loved so well, his heart's best treasure.

And this was Barton's work.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN THE TOILS.

WALLACE WAS at once tried before a court of justice, and convicted of the crime of which he was as innocent as the child unborn.

Barton's demoniacal plan had worked well. He had of course intercepted Rose's letters to Wallace, and obtained possession of several written by the latter, which were never allowed to reach their destination. Consequently he knew just where to find her on his return to Lowell.

When he reached his home after the imprisonment of his rival, he found Clarice, the one being in all the wide world whom he really loved, ill with a fever. For a few days every other thought was swallowed up in the wild fear that almost paralyzed his heart as he stood by his child's bed of suffering, and looked into the burning, feverishly bright eyes, and watched the pretty golden head tossing restlessly on the heated pillow.

All through the long hours of the night he watched beside her, bathing her fevered brow, and administering the medicine that had been left for her on a table by the bedside.

The struggle between life and death was very evenly balanced, and more than once he thought the breath had left the little body, but it was not to be, and often during the years of woe that came to him he wished in bitter agony that it had been otherwise.

When Clarice was out of danger he returned with redoubled vigor to the plans and schemes which were to secure to her the fortune of her wealthy grand-uncle.

He sauntered into the reading-room of the hotel to look over the morning paper, on the fourth day of Clarice's convalescence, and as we have before related, overheard a conversation which led him

to fear his uncle's imbecility was only a pretense to test the depth of his affection for him, and the worthiness of his heir expectant.

As we have before related, he followed his uncle to the cottage on the hillside, and to his intense delight found Rose Michel there. The words she had spoken in deterioration of himself strengthened his purpose; and he swore to make her his before another week had passed.

How he succeeded in entrapping her we have already seen. He watched her pale, grave, anguished face without a gleam of pity in his eyes, knowing that he had gained the mastery over her, and exulting in the pain he had dealt her.

Rose's heart was full of a thousand conflicting emotions. She knew she need expect no mercy at his hands, and that there was unfortunately no chance of her being able to save Archie Wallace from the fate to which this evil genius of her life had doomed him. That she would accede to his wish, and be his wife she never once believed possible.

The sound of his voice was unutterably hateful to her; the touch of his hand sent a shudder of repulsion through her entire being. How then could she consent, even to save the life so dear to her, to be his wife?

Her very soul turned sick with horror, and a convulsive shudder shook her from head to foot.

For some time only the sound of the rumbling wheels and the rattling of the window glass broke the silence. At last Barton spoke:

"Well, Rose, have you concluded to act like a sensible girl? have you given up the useless struggle? Will you let me drive to a clergyman who will tie the knot that makes us man and wife? Your lover shall be freed within twenty-four hours. Come, girl, give me your answer, but think well before you refuse. I am giving you the chance for the last time; should you still fight against the inevitable—well, I can only warn you that you are in my power, and I can force your compliance. Archie Wallace cannot live much longer in confinement; he is already worn to a shadow; the shame attached to his name and the enforced separation from his mother are killing him; he begged me to compass his release, so you see he has forgotten that pride that agreed so well with his poverty. I told him on what condition he could hope for mercy, and he urged me to ask you, for his mother's sake, to agree to my terms. Will you heed his wish, Rose?"

Despite the agonizing pain that tugged at her heart-strings Rose could not forbear smiling, and again her clear eyes daunted him.

"Do you think I am a child, or an idiot, to believe the vile slanders you so bunglingly invent to break my spirit? Bah! Henry Barton, Archie Wallace would die, as the martyrs did of old, a death of torture rather than owe his life to you. He loves me as the man loves the woman whom he would take for a life partner, and rather than see me in your power he would bury a knife in my heart. You have some of my letters to him, you say; perhaps so; you are fully capable of stealing them from his room when he was not there to defend them, but you never received them from his hands. I could stake my hopes of heaven on that."

The tone of scathing scorn in which the words were spoken enraged him terribly. He knew they were all true, and because he could not triumph over the girl, and make her believe her lover false, he could have strangled her in his blind rage. "Fool! you shall suffer for this. Your devoted knight shall be tortured by doubts and fears that will make life unendurable; you shall be a witness to his suffering, and your heart will be wrung with the sight of his agony!"

Rose moaned aloud, for before her mind's eye arose the picture of Archie, suffering alone in a gloomy prison cell, with no gleam of light to cheer the darkness of his heart—no word of love to bid him hope.

In the sad, wild longing that came upon her to see his face, to clasp his hand once more, only once more, she flung herself down on the floor of the carriage at Barton's feet—her pride forgotten, her love alone remembered.

"Take me to him," she wailed; "let me look upon his face, touch his forehead with my lips, and I will grant you any boon. Give him liberty; let me tell him he shall be free, and I will give my life into your keeping—and end it in the same hour!"

The last sentence was spoken under her breath. Barton only realized that she had given her promise to be his wife, and his dark face grew radiant with joy, while he tried to raise her in his arms.

She shrank from the touch of his hand with a passionate cry of expulsion, and exclaimed: "No, no, do not touch me; not yet, not yet, not until your compact is fulfilled. Not until I see him once more, for the last time; not until I part from him forever."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PAST AND PRESENT.

Her word once given, Barton knew he might rely upon it, and his heart was lightened of a heavy load, for the days when a man may with impunity force a woman into an unwilling marriage, existed only in novels, and by a marriage with Rose Michel he could only hope to share Walter Greyson's property. He could easily gain for her admittance into the prison where Wallace was confined, and he knew the marks of suffering on the noble, proud face would strengthen her in her resolution to save him at the price of her own happiness.

He had no power to work Wallace's release except by condemning himself, and this he had no notion of doing. What cared he for this? once the girl was tied to him he could laugh at her agony, and laugh to contempt her accusations and reproaches.

In the meantime, until he could take her to Boston, and make her his wife, he must keep her under his own eye, lest she should learn that which would cause her to take back her promise.

The carriage stopped at last before the door of a little country inn, and Barton handed Rose out. She was faint and ill, and unable to contend with him.

"You shall be my sister to-night, Rose; I will bid you farewell at your chamber door. Sleep well, and remember that before another sun sets, you will have bidden the old life and its association adieu forever, and have started on a new existence."

With these words whispered in her ear as he conducted her to the chamber he had hired for her, Barton entered the room he was himself to occupy, which was situated directly opposite that of Rose, across the hallway.

"A new existence indeed," the poor girl murmured, throwing herself on her knees before the bed and giving way to the passionate grief that was breaking her heart.

Raising her eyes toward Heaven, those great, blue, wistful eyes, wild with hopeless despair, she tried to pray, but the words on her lips were not echoed by her heart, and great convulsive sobs reached her breast.

"My God! my God! if I end this torture, if I end this dreadful agony, can the suicide's punishment excel the horror of this wretched life. Oh, Archie, Archie, my love, my darling! it is for your sake—for your sake, only to see your face once more—and then to die."

All through the long, dreary hours of the night Rose Michel lay prone upon the floor, suffering as few of her tender years had ever suffered, tired; oh, God, how tired of life, and its mysteries, while the man whom she had rightly named her "evil genius," slept peacefully as if no burden of guilt was on his soul, slept lightly and dreamlessly as an innocent child, whose young life had known no shadow of grief or sin.

The face of the girl whom he had rendered so unutterably miserable did not haunt him, nor did that of the dead father whose calm, handsome face he had looked upon in the coffin, or the angel mother whose sister had been his own parent, and with whom she had played in happy childhood's days.

His conscience was dead, he was utterly heartless and unfeeling, and his cousin was no more to him than an utter stranger.

The sun was shining bright into the room when

Rose aroused herself, and attempted to regain her composure.

She remembered the journey upon which she was that day going, and removing her shawl she proceeded to bathe her tear-swollen face.

Chancing to glance in the glass hanging above the little wash-stand, she uttered a cry of horror. Was that ghastly, rigid face, the same of which she had been so innocently proud in the happy twilight hours gone forever, when dear old mother Wallace nodded over her knitting in the chimney corner, and Archie read to them from some tender old romances, pausing now and then to press his lips on the shining curls of golden hair, as she sat on a low chair beside him, sewing in the light of the blazing wood fire.

"My God! what a change, what a dreadful change," she moaned, "and what a short time has worked this change. Ah, Father above, you were kinder to the aged woman whom you called away from earth. She sleeps peacefully, and at rest, while her beloved boy pines in a prison cell, and I—no, no! I must not think of myself, or I will go mad ere I have seen his face, I must not let him see how much I have suffered, I must try to be calm, though my heart breaks in the struggle—hark, I hear his footsteps. How my brain reels, and my heart sickens at the thought of him. Bah, how I detest him! I would suffer the tortures of the condemned rather than endure life with him."

Henry Barton's knock sounded upon the door at this moment, and hastily tying on her hat, and drawing her crape veil over her face, she opened it, and passed out, lest he should enter and have a chance of speaking with her alone.

"Why, my darling! you are looking as fresh as a daisy this morning, did you enjoy a good night's rest?" he asked, sarcastically, noting, even through the thick folds of her veil, the deadly pallor of her face.

She followed him into the narrow dining-room and drank a cup of coffee, forcing it down when it almost choked her, that her strength might not fail her, until she reached her journey's end.

When the scanty meal was ended, he motioned her toward the carriage, the same that had brought them hither, offering her his hand to assist her to enter.

She did not touch it, but sprang into the vehicle without his aid, and turning her face from him, gazed out of the window, with eyes that saw not that on which they looked.

Barton did not disturb her, his mind was busy with plans for the future.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE JOURNEY.

It was the most wretched journey Rose had ever taken, that morning ride to Boston, in Henry Barton's company. It was a clear, calm day, very cold, but with a sun that shone so intensely bright its brilliant rays seemed to mock her grief.

As the train rattled along over meadows and woodland, her thoughts were all of him to whom every revolution of the iron wheels were bringing her nearer and nearer—the man whom she loved with all the strength and devotion of a woman's heart, the man whose pulse had been wont to thrill at the sound of her voice or the touch of her hand.

On what an errand was she going! To see him in a prison cell, innocent of crime, suffering through the villainy of another, and that other—great Heaven! how her brain reeled, how her soul sickened within her as she thought of the promise she had made him, to be his wife if he saved him from the fate to which he had so mercilessly doomed him. *His wife!* his wife, when every chance touch of his hand filled her with loathing unutterable, when the sound of his detested voice struck the chill of death to her heart.

"My God, what a fate! what a terrible fate! but there is one release, thank Heaven, and one desperate step will end it all—oh, Archie, love, it is for your sake, for your sake, my darling," she whispered, as the train drew near its destination, and Barton's voice aroused her from the reverie into which she had fallen.

"Come, Rose, we are at our journey's end. When we travel again you will be my wife—nay, do not shudder, there are many wealthy and talented ladies who would envy you the honor I am conferring upon you."

Rose made no reply, save one quick glance of her blue eyes that made him drop his own; and when they were stepping out upon the platform at the station, she refused him her hand when he would have assisted her to alight.

He shut his teeth hard to keep back the angry words that rose to his lips, and called a cab, ordering its driver to convey them to the prison in which Wallace was so unjustly confined.

Rose never once thought, in her innocence of the world and its ways, that to obtain a pardon for the prisoner, Barton would be obliged to forswear himself, and revoke his former testimony.

Had she once thought of this she would have seen how unfounded were her hopes, how useless her sacrifice.

While she fondly hoped that by her sacrifice she was purchasing freedom for her loved Archie, Barton was laughing in his sleeve at his success in so duping her, it would be a glorious revenge for him to make her his wife, and when she was tied to him irrevocably, crush her to the earth by a knowledge of his treachery.

He could not have explained the nature of his feelings toward her. She was beautiful as the "lily maid of Astalot," pure as an angel, gentle and loving, as is the nature of one so innocent and true, yet he hated her.

In every glance of her pure violet eyes, in every varying expression of her ever-changing, ever-beautiful face, he could read the scorn and contempt she could not hide.

He was, as she believed, rich and powerful, and that she should prefer to him a poor tradesman, galled him beyond power of endurance. She was his cousin, and since his uncle had discovered his unworthiness, he knew that Rose would be chosen in his place, and that himself and his idolized child would be deprived of the wealth they had expected to inherit when that uncle died.

Once Rose was his wife the property was secure, for as man and wife they would of course be one, and their interests be identical.

Rose might—like a captive bird beating its wings against its prison bars—struggle and chaff at the hands that made her his own, but what would it avail her?

He laughed aloud, as the carriage bore them nearer and nearer to the prison, as he thought of his triumph and its anticipated results. Rose sat like a statue carved in marble, motionless, and almost as white and cold.

How should she meet her lover, how speak her farewell to him?

He must not know what she was about to do for his sake. She knew he would rather a thousand times die a languishing death within the prison's gloomy walls than that she should be doomed to such a fate.

"He must not know it, no! no! I would rather he believed me faithless, I would rather he despised me, and make himself happy in another's love, than that his heart be broken by a knowledge of the truth."

These were the words she would have spoken could she have unburdened her breaking heart, these were the unselfish thoughts that filled her brain, as the coach drew up before the gray-looking pile which constituted the city prison.

"Remain where you are for a moment, while I seek permission for you to enter," Barton exclaimed, and left her for nearly half an hour alone in the carriage.

The moments dragged like hours, and poor Rose's tortured heart seemed breaking.

Through what a terrible ordeal must she pass. Everything that she had suffered heretofore sank into insignificance before the parting that was before her, and when at last she saw Barton returning for her, she threw her hands over her eyes with the anguished cry:

"Oh, Father in heaven, give me strength; for without thy aid I cannot endure it."

Barton's hand fell somewhat heavily on her shoulder, and his deep voice aroused her from her trance of grief.

"Come along, Rose; through my intercession, half-an-hour's interview is granted you. Say all you have to say in that time, and bid him a last farewell, for when you meet again, you meet as strangers; there can be no friendship between the wife of Henry Barton and a released prisoner."

Rose could not command her voice to speak, but the crimson tide of anger rushed hotly to cheek and brow, and her blue eyes flashed ominously.

With steps that trembled so that she was forced to accept the support of his arm, she walked up the path that led to the prison entrance, where a keeper met them with a bunch of keys in his hands.

"Follow this person, Rose, he will lead you to Wallace's cell. I will stay in the waiting-room until you rejoin me. Remember, your time is limited to half-an-hour," said Barton, in the quick, imperative tone of one used to command.

With a heart throbbing so wildly that she could plainly hear its loud pulsations, Rose followed the keeper through winding halls and corridors, until at last he paused and inserted a key in the lock of one of the low iron doors.

The dreaded moment had come at last.

CHAPTER XXXV.

DOUBTS AND FEARS.

ALONE in his narrow cell, with its damp stone walls and tiny grated window, looking out upon the court-yard before the prison, Archie Wallace sat upon the rude bed, with his head bent forward on his clasped hands, thinking of the poor old mother whose face he would never see on earth again.

"Oh, dear old mother, what would I not give to clasp you in my arms once more, how your poor heart must ache for me, my loving mother; but you know I am innocent, you would not believe me guilty, though all the world condemned me."

Often, oh, so often, he repeated this assurance over and over again, as though it comforted him. The mother spirit seemed to hover round him, for sleeping, his dreams were of her, and waking, his mind dwelt on her continually.

His love for Rose was the one passion of his life, yet strange to say, after the first few days of his imprisonment, when he tried to think of her in all her glorious beauty and sweetness, the kindly old face, and drooped white head of his parent rose in its place.

There came no heaven-born inspiration to tell him that the cheery old voice had for him no more a welcome, and that the eyes which had ever met his own with glances of love and tenderness, were closed forever; and hidden away under the cold, damp sods of the earth.

On the day of which we write, as he sat in the dreary prison cell whose silence was only broken by the sounds of drunken cries and moans of lamentation from adjoining cells, Archie's mind dwelt on the dear ones he had left with hopeful hearts, but tearful faces, in the humble Lowell tenement.

"Rose! my darling Rose! will never let poor mother want for anything that her loving care can provide. She will work for her, even as she worked for the father who is gone; but oh my love! my heart's darling, how can I live for years confined by prison walls, while you are toiling your young life away, to provide for the wants of my mother?"

The words broke from the prisoner's heart like a wail of despair, and rising from the bed he paced the narrow limits of his cell like a caged lion, pausing at last before the little grated window, and pressing his face against the iron bars.

The azure blue of the wintry sky was beautiful beyond compare to his weary eyes, and he stood for some time gazing up at it as the galley slave gazes on the green fields and fertile meadows his feet may tread no more.

The sound of carriage wheels stopping before the prison entrance suddenly attracted his attention, and glancing downward he sees a gentleman assisting a slender, little black-robed figure from the coach, which has indeed stopped before the door.

As the gentleman turns his face towards the

prison, the lonely watcher behind the grating utters a cry of astonishment, and his hazel eyes flash and sparkle ominously.

"Henry Barton!" he exclaims. "What can bring him here? God grant he has not come to taunt and mock me, for if there be power in my arm, or courage in my heart, I will stretch him dead at my feet if he enters my presence to-day."

The blue veins were swollen like whip-cords on his forehead, and his hands were clenched so tightly that the sharp nails cut deep into his palms.

Archie Wallace was a good man, brave, and loyal to the heart's core, but Barton had taxed him too far, and human nature could endure no more. It would not have been well for Henry Barton had he dared to intrude his hated presence on the man whom he had wronged so terribly.

Archie's face was white to the very lips, and when the keeper's key grated in the lock of his cell door, he trembled from head to foot—not with fear, but with the intense passion that would not be controlled.

"I will be back for you in half-an-hour, miss," said the keeper, in a gruff voice, and the lady in black, who had accompanied Barton, was ushered into the cell, and the door locked on the outside. The heavy crape veil she wore concealed her features, and Wallace stood motionless, waiting for her to speak, wondering vaguely who she could be, and what was her business with him. Something in the slender, willowy figure, and the erect carriage of the small, regal head, reminded him of Rose Michel, but he never harbored the thought that this was she—this well-dressed woman whom he had seen alighting from a carriage with his bitter enemy.

The visitor seemed to be pausing to summon strength to speak, and at last, with a cry that chilled the life-blood in his veins threw back her veil, and stood revealed in the dim light of the prison cell—Rose Michel, indeed, the girl on whose fidelity he would have fearlessly staked his existence. For the first moment of rapture her presence gave him, Archie forgot in whose company she had come; forgot everything but that she was near him, that her pure eyes were seeking his face, and with a glad cry he sprang forward and caught her in his arms, straining her close to his desolate, aching heart.

For a moment she clung to him wildly, nestling close to him, like a frightened bird, and returning his passionate, lingering kisses. Then she drew herself, shivering, from his embrace, and knelt at his feet, covering his hands with her tears, which had burst forth as if the flood-gates of her soul had opened. Her head had fallen back, and all her wealth of golden hair streamed in cloudlike masses round her shoulders, while a ray of sunlight, entering the barred window, fell full upon the lovely, upturned face, tear-drenched now, like a lily beaten down by a summer shower.

There was something so expressive of remorse, and even shame, in that beautiful, upward-turned countenance, that Archie drew away from her with a hoarse groan.

She tried to speak, but her tongue refused to obey her will, and as Guinever grovelled at the feet of her betrayed lord with her golden head low in the dust, so now crouched his beloved Rose, with the look of a Magdalen on the face he had been wont to think pure as one of Heaven's angels. With a violence of which he was not himself aware, he dragged her to the light of the window, crying out in a voice that he would not have recognized as his:

"My God! Rose Michel, what means this look of guilt and fear upon your face? Why do you kneel to me and bathe my hands with your tears; and now that I think of it why—oh Heaven! why do I see you in the society of the man who sought your ruin, and who placed me here? Speak, Rose, speak quickly. My God! what is this terror that creeps into my heart? Why do I dread to hear the tones of the voice that was sweeter to me than any earthly music?"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FAREWELL.

WALLACE's passionate words rang in Rose's ears

like the cry of a broken heart, and by an almost superhuman effort, she controlled her agitation and raised herself from the crouching attitude at his feet.

"Archie," she whispered, smiling up at him through her tears. "Archie, do not look so strangely at me, it will break my heart. Oh, Archie, Archie, love! I could not live if you were here confined in this terrible place, innocent of crime—for I know you are guiltless. I—I have good news for you, dear, you shall be free ere the dawn of another day; you shall be free, do you hear, Archie? Are they not blissful words? free to—"

Her voice choked her, she could not continue; how could she tell him there would be no kindly mother's voice to welcome him no word of love to cheer his lonely heart, how should she tell him that henceforth they must be as strangers, he and she, as strangers forevermore.

She must not breathe the truth to him yet, for sooner than owe his liberty to the promised wife of Henry Barton she knew he would dash his brains out against the stone walls of his prison cell.

He noticed her hesitation, but in the simplicity of his honest heart he did not wrong her by one suspicion, and for a moment he gazed at her in silence. Her blue eyes fell beneath his steady glance, and again the hot blood dyed her cheeks.

Taking her in his arms, and folding her—as a mother folds a weary child—to his breast, he kissed the down-dropped lids and the tremulous lips fondly.

"My darling! My own dear love! I know what you would say; you will tell me that I will be free to claim my little bride, my heart's best earthly treasure. Oh, Rose, Rose, if you knew how my heart has hungered for you, how I have yearned for a sight of that sweet face in the dreary solitude of this wretched cell, all through the long dark hours of the night, and when the sun shone bright on the outer world. My dear one, if my innocence is indeed made clear at last, and as you say I will be free once more, how happy we will be. My darling Rose—my dear old mother and I—ah, little one, Heaven has blessed me in your love. I will be reinstated in my position in Osgood's factory if my innocence is established, and we will all live in Boston so happily, in the humble home which I will provide for my dear ones."

Archie was speaking dreamily, and half unconsciously, his handsome face bright with anticipations of the happy future, and his clear hazel eyes, with the lovelights shining in their misty depths, fixed full upon her face.

Rose shivered, as if every word he uttered cut into her heart like a keen-edged dagger, and shrank away out of the reach of his arms.

The time had come when she could no longer deceive him, she must wring his honest heart with an agony that only strong men can suffer and endure, and with desperate calmness she began the task.

"Archie! we may never be happy in the way you mention, your mother—"

"My mother! what of her, Rose? Your looks frighten me; you tremble and you turn pale when you speak of her; is she ill?" Archie interrupted, eagerly scanning Rose's face.

"She is not ill, Archie, she is happier—oh, God! how much happier than you or I. She will suffer no more, no more forever."

"Dead! dead! my mother!" moaned Archie, with a groan that seemed to rend his heart, as he dropped his head on the stone window-edge; his strong form trembling convulsively.

Rose had no words with which to comfort him, and for a moment his heavy breathing alone disturbed the solitude. At last he looked up and asked calmly:

"When did it happen, Rose? Was it news of my disgrace that killed her, and where—oh, God! where have they laid her?"

Rose answered his hurried questions calmly, telling him how his mother died, but saying nothing of her own share in the interment of the remains.

The loud striking of the great clock in the hall startled them, and Rose's heart beat wildly, for the moment of parting was at hand. She seemed

at a loss what to say or how to leave him. With faltering voice, and eyes whose look of hunted terror haunted him for many a day, she held out her hands to him and whispered:

"Good-bye, Archie; to-morrow you will be free; you will go out into the world again and commence your fortune anew; you will be very happy, my Archie, happy, as you deserve to be."

"But Rose, my love, what means these tears? You alone can make me happy. Why do you speak as if you would not share my fortune? You do not—no, no, I would not wrong you by harboring such a thought—you have not ceased to love me?"

"Hush, hush, you will kill me; ceased to love you! My God! when every fiber of my being, every pulse of my heart thrills at the sight of your face. Oh, Archie, fold me to your breast once more, and whatever the future brings forth, never doubt my love for you; do not despise me or curse my memory when I am dead; you will press your lips to mine when they can give back no answering caress, and to my eyes when they can no longer see you; promise me this, Archie, promise me that when I go to meet my Creator, you will forget my faults and remember that I loved you with all the strength of my heart, all the fervor of my nature."

She was clinging to him convulsively, her sweet young face working with emotion, and voiceless sobs rocking her slender form.

Unutterably astonished and bewildered, Wallace could only cry out: "My darling, what do you mean, is your brain wandering, or,"—and a dark shadow settled over his face—"or have you sold yourself for gold? Whence came these fine clothes, and why do you ask me to forgive your faults? In Heaven's name do not keep me in suspense."

The sound of a heavy footfall outside the cell door fell upon the girl's ear as she would have answered, and a key grated in the lock.

"My God! he comes! Archie, farewell forever," she cried wildly, staggering blindly toward the door, which the keeper at this moment opened.

"Time is up, Miss—Oh, she is fainting," he ejaculated, and Rose would have fallen to the ground, had he not received her in his strong arms, and drew her out into the corridor, locking the door between her and the prisoner.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE WEDDING DAY.

THE prisoner's heart sickened within him, and his brain reeled. What construction could he put upon her strange conduct. That Rose was false to him seemed an idea too horrible to entertain for a moment, yet every word she had spoken led to that conclusion. For a moment after the door closed on her he stood as she had left him, his arms half extended to take her in their embrace, and his eyes fixed upon the spot where she last stood. Then like one awakening from some horrid nightmare he groaned aloud, and dashing the cold drops of sweat from his forehead staggered toward the window, which as we have said commanded a view of the entrance. The carriage still stood there, and as he gazed upon it in a sort of fascination, Henry Barton walked down to it, half supporting, half carrying the fainting form of Rose.

As he lifted her into the coach she raised her face toward the window from which Archie gazed. It was such a white anguished face that a heart of stone might have pitied her, but the watcher at the window only ground his teeth and covered his eyes to shut out the sight of the fair, false face.

"Heaven pity me, this is the cruellest blow of all! He is my rival, this man whom she professed to hate and scorn, she came to me in his carriage, she leaves me for his arms. Oh, God! how much the heart may suffer and still live on! My dear old mother! faithful heart! thank Heaven you did not live to see me bowed to the earth as I am to-day. She spoke of her love to me—curses on the love that can be bought for gold! Oh, Rose, Rose! would to Heaven I had not lived to see this day. Had an angel from the skies come down

to condemn you I would not have believed you false to me."

Pacing the narrow limits of his cell, Wallace spoke aloud, deep, broken sobs rising to his lips, and the hot tears trickling through his fingers.

The carriage containing Rose and Barton drove quickly out of the prison gates, the noise of the rumbling wheels sounding to the ears of the prisoner like a knell that tolled the death of all his hopes.

What to him now was freedom, when the sunlight of his existence had vanished forever, and black and lowering clouds obscured the sky. White and cold, and oh, so altered, Rose lay back on the cushion of the carriage, scarcely conscious of her surroundings.

Once or twice Barton addressed her, but she gave no sign of having heard him, until he laid his hand on her shoulder to attract her attention. Then indeed she aroused herself, shrinking with a low moan from his touch, and whispering in a dazed sort of way. "Not yet, not yet, do not touch me, I cannot stand it until all is over—until all is over!" She was thinking of the death cold face and senseless form that would be all that remained of her when all was over; living, she would never submit to his caresses.

Her guardian angel was further and further from her with each fleeting moment, for the desperate resolution to end her life grew stronger and stronger.

Barton did not interpret her words aright; he thought she alluded to their proposed marriage, and exulted over his easy conquest.

"We will be married privately at the hotel, and you will return with me to Lowell as my wife," he said, and Rose's face was suddenly upraised to his while her blue sad eyes sought his own.

"I must first know that he is free," she exclaimed with a shudder, and a backward motion of her hand toward the gloomy gray walls of the prison.

Barton smiled significantly, and replied: "Very well, my dear, when we are wedded you shall see how your husband keeps his promise."

The hotel was reached at last, where the ceremony was to be performed, and a set of rooms hired by Barton. Leaving Rose in her apartments he set out in search of the clergyman to perform the strange marriage ceremony.

He returned in less than an hour, accompanied by the Rev. John Walters, a seedy looking individual, whose small gray eyes sparkled when Barton slipped in his hand a roll of bank-notes, as a reward for the unusual hurried performance. He found Rose just in the same position he had left her, seated on a chair near the door, with her hands locked together in her lap, and her blue eyes looking vacantly at the opposite wall.

"Come, Rose, my dear, the minister is waiting. Take off that crape-draped hat, and brush out those long yellow curls. You are scarcely attired as becomes Henry Barton's bride; but, under the circumstances, you will do. Come along, don't keep us waiting!" Barton exclaimed, eager to end the suspense under which he labored.

"Leave me a moment, I will join you," she replied in a low, strange voice, and something in the blue eyes, raised for a moment to his, inspired him to obey her.

For half an hour he and the minister impatiently awaited her coming, but at the end of that time she joined them, white as a statue carved in alabaster, with her golden hair falling in loose curls around her shoulders, and her great blue eyes lighting up her sweet young face like twin stars.

"This is the lady whom I would make my wife," exclaimed Barton, after introducing to her the Rev. Mr. Walters.

She bowed slightly, and without a word stood up by Barton's side; a couple of servants had been called in as witnesses, and everything was ready. The ceremony had just begun to be read by the minister, when the door was opened hastily, and a messenger entered and handed Barton a telegram.

With a face changing to a ghastly hue, he opened it and read:

"Come home at once; Clarice cannot be found."

He staggered toward the door like one who had been shot, crying aloud: "My God! my child!

saddle a horse at once—ah! there is one at the door—I must reach the depot in five minutes, if I would catch the first train. Clarice, Clarice, my child!"

Snatching his hat from a table, he darted out of the house, leaving Rose standing bewildered by the clergyman's side.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE TABLES TURNED.

THE train that bore Henry Barton homeward seemed to the anxious man's excited fancy to creep like a snail over the meadows. His child was the one earthly being his base heart clung to with true devotion, and she was in peril. The brief words of the telegram left much to be inferred, and his brain conjured up all manner of horrors. For the time he allowed himself to forget his plans, the interrupted wedding, and the girl who had been so nearly his wife. He was only a father now, his whole heart strained out to the little blue-eyed creature whom he loved so well.

He had never thought the distance from Boston to Lowell was so great before, but to-day he was wild with impatience and anxiety. Reaching his home at last, he found the house all in confusion. Clarice had disappeared the night previous, and no trace of her could be found. The child had been sleeping soundly in her bed, when Katie, the nurse, left her for a gossip with her fellow-servants in the kitchen. This was about nine o'clock. When she again entered the nursery at ten o'clock to retire for the night, she found the child's bed empty. What seemed most strange about the occurrence was that Clarice had evidently gone of her own free will, for her clothes were gone from their chair by her bedside, and her little hat and cloak from the wardrobe, while a gentleman living opposite had seen the child descending the stoop at a little before ten o'clock, clinging to the hand of a tall man. More information than this Barton could obtain from no source. Owing to the darkness of the night, and the lateness of the hour, the gentleman who had seen Clarice leave the house had failed to recognize her escort.

The father was almost wild with alarm and grief, he could imagine no clue to the mystery; the nurse was in strong hysterics and her terrified cries rang through the house. Barton paced the deserted nursery, trying vainly to collect his thoughts, and form some plan for the recovery of his treasure.

"I will go to Uncle Walter, he may have some suspicion of the perpetrator of this outrage. Oh, my child, my darling girl, why can you not answer my call?"

He dropped his head wearily on the cold marble mantel as he spoke, and tears, bitter as those he had wrung from the eyes of Rose Michel, rolled down his cheeks. Again, like an echo of some long forgotten music, came to him Rose Michel's words:

"You have a fair young child growing up by your fireside; she too is motherless. What if, in after years, your gold took wings and left you penniless? What if your cherished one was placed in my position and found a master such as you have been to me?"

A vague, haunting terror took possession of him. The room seemed filled with ghastly specters of the dead past, and grasping his hat he hurried from the house. The air oppressed him like that of a tomb, and cold drops of sweat stood out like beads on his forehead.

He made his way with all possible speed to his uncle's residence, and was admitted by Paul, who smiled significantly as he ushered him into his master's presence.

Barton expected to find his uncle still pretending unconsciousness of his surroundings, and thought by suddenly announcing to him the mysterious disappearance of little Clarice to surprise him into a betrayal of the truth. What was his surprise and consternation when Walter Greyson accosted him as follows:

"Henry, what have you done with Rose Michel? and where have you hidden the gold locket you stole from my chamber while I lay at the point of death? Look into my eyes and answer me falsely if you dare."

The villain was taken entirely off his guard; he reddened to the eyes and attempted to stammer out some reply without meeting his uncle's gaze. He was too deeply dyed in deception, however, to be long at a loss for a reply.

Shaking off the feeling of terror that had crept over him at his uncle's strange manner he spoke in a tone of pretended sorrow.

"My dear uncle, what new delusion is this? What possesses you to accuse me of such a terrible crime? Surely you know not to whom you speak."

"No, no, Henry, that tone of wounded innocence does not affect me in the least. I am laboring under no delusion. I know but too well whom I am addressing, the man whose life I have surrounded with every comfort and luxury; the man whom I have loved and indulged like a favorite son, whose lightest wish has been my law since the days of his earliest childhood. You are an ingrate, Henry Barton; you have turned like a snake in the grass and stung the hand that cherished and fed you. A messenger brought me this morning the tidings of your loss. I cannot pity you, although my heart aches for the little one whose fate is shrouded in mystery. Remember Rose Michel and think what a blow it would be to your heart to know in after years that even as you made her suffer, so your cherished child is suffering."

The low spoken words sounded like a prophecy, a foreshadowing of the future woe in store for him, and the strong man sobbed aloud in his agony, his massive frame quivering with suppressed emotion, while the man who had loved him with a father's love, looked on his suffering unmoved.

Suddenly Barton's mood changed. He raised his face, all haggard and care-lined, to meet his uncle's steady gaze, and with a reckless laugh, and a look of defiant hatred in his dark gleaming eyes, said:

"You may do your worst, Uncle Greyson, I still hold the winning card; Rose Michel will be my wife ere the dawn of another day. You may make her your heiress if you will, but she shall never enjoy alone the wealth that would have belonged to my child. The locket you accuse me of stealing——"

"Is once more in my possession," interrupted Mr. Greyson, holding up the little golden trinket before the eyes of the astonished man.

"Curses on my carelessness, how came I to lose it," muttered Barton between his clinched teeth, while unnoticed by him the door behind him opened slowly, and obeying a motion of Mr. Greyson's hand, the servant Paul and the man Harper, who had been Barton's tool for a number of years, entered the apartment.

"Ah! ah! so these are the noble foes with whom I am expected to cope, are they?" exclaimed the baffled villain, looking scornfully into the faces of his two accusers. "Since judge and jury are assembled let me hear their verdict," he continued, as a momentary pause ensued.

Walter Greyson had thrown himself wearily into a chair, his face was white and worn, and the hair around his forehead was white as though years had passed over him, since the day that seemed so far distant in the past, when Rose Michel had pleaded with him for the mercy his nephew had denied her.

For a time an ominous silence reigned, broken only by a triumphant whisper breathed by Harper into Barton's ear:

"I told you my time would come."

At last, after many attempts to control his rising emotion, Mr. Greyson spoke:

"Henry, there is no need for further dissembling. I know you for what you are, a villain of the deepest dye. You have been staking large sums of money—not your own—at the gambling table for the last ten years; that is a fault could have been easily forgiven, but it is your lightest offense. You took a fancy to a young girl employed in our factory, and followed and persecuted her like the coward that you are. She was too good and pure to listen to your vile pleadings, and for that you hated her and swore to possess her by fair means or foul. Driven to desperation by your persecutions, hungry and weak, and hopeless, she left your office after an interview—the details of

which would call the blush of shame to any cheek—and blind with the tears which you had wrung from her eyes, did not see her danger until she was whirling round in that dreadful wheel.

"Mangled and bleeding she lay before your eyes; yet no throb of pity quickened the pulses of your heart. She was now utterly helpless in your power, and you exulted in the thought.

"When you begged me to leave her in your care I assented readily, proud of your generosity; never dreaming that I was trusting the dove to the mercy of the hawk.

"On the night of the accident the girl's identity was revealed to me, and in hurrying to my home, from the bedside of her dead father, I met with the accident which, as you thought furthered your plans. While Paul was undressing me, he noticed you stoop and pick something up from the ground.

"In the excitement of the next few days he thought nothing of this, but since I have recovered I knew that it was the locket, the proof of Rose Michel's relationship to myself.

"I pretended continued imbecility the better to watch your movements. Paul has long suspected your rascality, and I hoped to prove his fears groundless; how great my disappointment!

"Your tool and confident has betrayed you, and been false to the trust you reposed in him. He has exposed everything; his share in the removal of Rose Michel from the hospital included.

"I thought the days of romance existed only in novels; I imagined that only the heavy villains on the stage employed be-wigged and false-bearded men to carry their fair ones away in the darkness of the night; yet I have been mistaken. You follow out the programme; a red-whiskered, red-haired man, attired in broadcloth and diamonds, claiming to be Rose Michel's uncle, demands her from the hospital physician, in whose care she has been placed, and shows a note from you, releasing her from your care. She is of course given up and immediately carried to the place you have prepared for her, by the pretended uncle, no less a personage than your valet, Harper, in disguise. You think yourself secure then, and congratulate yourself on your easy conquest, but the God of the orphan protects the innocent being you would destroy, and she is saved at the eleventh hour. You hate him who was God's instrument in saving her, and although you afterward owe your life to him, you seize on the first opportunity that offers of ruining him. Hearing that he has obtained employment in Boston you hunt him down, and as if to verify the saying that 'Satan favors his own,' you find in his employer a man over whom you hold some secret power; a plan is quickly formed by which your enemy—as you are pleased to term him—is accused falsely, accused of robbery and thrown into prison.

"All this time, Harper, who is your bitterest enemy—on account of a cruel blow you struck his mother, who has died since then—followed your movements, finding out with the skill of a practical detective, every incident of your daily life, and reporting to me his progress.

"On the day of Mrs. Wallace's funeral, when your messenger decoyed Rose Michel from the graveyard, Harper was not far away. He lost sight of you for a few hours in Boston; but if the telegram announcing your child's disappearance arrived in time to prevent your marriage with the girl whom you have wronged so cruelly, all is well. This locket which you seem so much surprised to find in my possession, was given back to me by Harper, who abstracted it from the hiding-place in which you had concealed it. In a few hours the world shall know that Rose Michel, the child of my beloved sister Laura, is to be my daughter and heiress!

"I will move Heaven and earth to obtain Archibald Wallace's release, and thus frustrate your hellish design! Go, now, you are no more to me than a stranger to whom I have never spoken. Go from my sight, Henry Barton, and darken my doors no more!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

BETRAYED AND BETRAYER.

LIKE one suddenly transformed into a statue of

marble, Henry Barton stood listening breathlessly to the words that struck like dagger thrusts to his heart, speaking no word, and giving no sign to tell how they crushed all the life and hope out of his heart. He knew that the game had gone against him, and he must throw up his cards. One long, vengeful glance he threw at Harper as he staggered toward the door, then, on the sudden impulse that prompted him to repay the debt of hate he owed him, drew his pistol, and pointing it at Harper, would have fired had not Paul sprang forward and dashed aside the uplifted arm. The pistol exploded, but its contents lodged in the opposite wall, and Henry Barton was spared the doom of a murderer.

Cursing the man who had betrayed him, and the uncle whose kind heart had cherished him through all the long years of his boyhood and youth, he hurried away in the direction of the lonely home, where a merry childish voice had been wont to welcome him; a voice whose music he might never hear more.

The home was his no longer, for, once it became known that he was not to be his uncle's heir, his creditors would come down on him and he would be obliged to part with it.

In one hour he had been robbed of everything his life held dear; his home, his wealth, his hopes for the future, and—worse than all—his darling child was taken from him.

The thought of little Clarice drove him almost frantic, and before returning to his desolated home, he called upon one of the most skillful detectives of the town, and employed him to search for her.

After a statement of the case, his suspicion at once fastened on Harper, who, knowing his master's love for the child, would be the one most likely to injure him through her.

With a heart somewhat lightened by the detective's words of cheer, Barton returned to his home for the purpose of obtaining a horse from the stables to convey him to the railway depot in time for the next train for Boston.

Firm in his belief that Rose would await his return for the sake of the lover whom she believed he alone could save, he determined to return to the place where he had left her, and unless his uncle's servant had already found her, make her his wife, and thus foil Walter Greyson's plans.

The journey was the longest he had ever taken, he thought, for beside the haunting terror that possessed him concerning his daughter's fate, the thought of the fate in store for him should he fail in making Rose Michel his wife almost maddened him.

Arriving at the hotel in which he had left her, he found to his consternation that she had left it only a few hours after he was called away.

Rendered almost frantic by the disappointment and the despair that brooded in his heart, he did not notice the strange, questioning glance cast upon him by the people surrounding the cashier's desk at which he had inquired.

Scarcely knowing where to turn his steps he sauntered into the reading room and took up a morning paper, more for the purpose of hiding his white, haggard face than for any intention of reading it.

Mechanically glancing through its columns his wandering gaze became suddenly riveted by a paragraph which chained his attention.

It was headed:

"Sudden death of a prominent citizen," and read as follows: "Theodore Miller, the junior partner of the well-known firm of Osgood and Miller, died suddenly of apoplexy, at his residence in Fremont street. He was the son-in-law of Oscar Osgood, the senior partner of the firm."

This was all; a simple announcement of the man's death, yet it was sufficient to blanch the cheeks of the reader, and send a vague thrill of terror to his heart. What if in dying Theodore Miller had betrayed his share in Archie Wallace's imprisonment! What more likely? The man was one of those timid, feminine natures that would shrink from the thought of death, and betray every misdeed he had committed in life in the hope of winning forgiveness after death.

"Curses on my luck! the whole world seems to have taken up arms against me in the one hour,"

he muttered, the veins on his forehead swelling like whip-cords, and his breath coming in panting gasps.

He had flung the paper from him, and was just emerging from the reading-room when a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder and a slow, deliberate voice spoke in his ear:

"Henry Barton, you are my prisoner; come with me."

With a cry like that of an animal brought to bay, he faced his captor, faltering out some words of protest against his arrest. The officer did not heed him, nor relax his firm grasp of his prisoner's arm.

"Come, sir, it will be useless to resist me. I will summon help unless you come with me quietly."

"What are your charges against me?" Barton asked, in a voice utterly devoid of hope.

The officer glanced carelessly over a paper he held in his hand, and answered:

"You are charged with theft and perjury."

The answer convinced the prisoner that his suspicion had been correct. Theodore Miller had betrayed him. He had fallen in the trap he had laid for another, and there was nothing now for him but to bear it in silence. Without a word he allowed himself to be conducted to the prison in which Archie Wallace was confined. The latter had been released about one hour previous to Barton's arrest, and by a singular coincidence, chanced to be coming down the steps as Barton ascended them.

For one brief second the rival lovers glanced full into each other's faces; there was nothing but scornful contempt on that of Archie Wallace, while Barton's gleaming eyes seemed to fairly blaze with passion and suppressed rage.

Archie was going out into the world, cleared of every suspicion, going out free to build his fortune anew, but there was nothing but desolation and loneliness in his heart.

All that held life dear to him was wrested from him.

The dear old mother would never more greet his coming; she slept on dreamlessly by Jessie's side. And Rose, the one love of his heart—what of her? He had seen her last in Barton's arms, entering wilfully the carriage which he occupied. When she was false to him what joy did life hold, what hope had he to live for?

He wandered aimlessly for some time after leaving the prison, turning his steps at last in the direction of the house occupied by Oscar Osgood, whose card he carried in his pocket.

"I will call on him as he requested; he may require me to take back my old position, but I will not accept his kind offer. I am alone in the world now; I will seek my fortune in the far West. I could not live among these old familiar scenes; they would recall to me constantly the fond hopes that are dead. Oh! Rose! Rose! I can understand now the meaning of your wild words when you begged me not to curse your memory when you were dead—dead to me—as you are to-day."

Musing thus he neared the residence of his old employer. He found the aged man bowed to the earth with shame and sorrow, for the dying confession of his daughter's husband had almost broken his heart. He greeted Wallace kindly, heartily sorry for the injustice which had been done to him, and offered him the place he had lost, which was firmly but respectfully declined.

Then, leaving Mr. Osgood alone in his grief, Archie took his departure. He was obliged to remain in Boston until after Barton's trial, as his evidence would be required and until that event took place he determined to seek lodgings in the little-garret room he had occupied previous to his incarceration.

All unprepared for the surprise that there awaited him, he tapped at the door that led into the landlady's room, and listlessly awaited an answer to his summons.

CHAPTER XL.

ARCHIE AND ROSE.

When Rose found herself alone with the clergy-

man after her intended husband's unceremonious departure, she could not realize for a moment that she had escaped the terrible fate of being his wife.

She half expected to hear herself addressed by his name, and a gleam of joy shone in her sweet azure eyes when she heard the minister's astonished voice exclaiming:

"This is indeed a most unprecedented occurrence, Miss Michel, I never saw anything to equal it. Pardon me, but is your intended husband subject to fits of insanity?"

She scarcely knew what reply she made him, she was so rejoiced to find herself free, and hurrying up to the room in which she had left her hat, she tied it hastily over her loosened golden hair, and with a feeling of intense relief left the hated place behind her, breathing in the fresh air of the outer world as if she had been stifling.

She had money in her possession, thanks to the generosity of Walter Greyson, and her first thought was where to obtain a lodging where she might have time to rest and compose her agitated mind.

She was a stranger in Boston, and knew not where to seek for what she wanted.

All at once a sudden thought struck her. She would go to the address she carried in her pocket, the former lodging of her lover, poor Archie Wallace. Perhaps she might be lucky enough to secure the very room in which he had sat while he wrote the loving words she carried next her heart.

"My poor Archie, my wronged love, he is innocent, surely God will not let him suffer unjustly. I will pray oh, so fervently, that Heaven will spare him, but never again, oh, never again, can I contemplate the sacrifice I would have made for his dear sake."

Rose was walking briskly in the direction of the house for which she was seeking as she meditated thus, and when at last she reached the little green painted door bearing the number for which she was looking so eagerly, her heart seemed to stop its pulsations.

Here was the humble habitation he had changed for a prison cell. Would she succeed in finding shelter beneath its roof? It would bring her nearer to him, she imagined, to be in the house where his face was known so well. With her fair young face flushed and eager she knocked upon the door, which was almost immediately opened by the woman of the house, who gazed in mute admiration on the lovely upturned face of her visitor ere asking her errand.

She was somewhat taken a-back on learning what the pretty blue-eyed girl was in search of, and for a moment hesitated before replying. Rose's heart sank within her, and the brightness died out of her eager blue eyes.

"I am not in the habit of letting my rooms to females, miss, but I would make an exception in your favor if I had one unoccupied. As it is, every room is full, except the garret, and that I have not tried to let, thinking every day that poor Mr. Wallace who used to sleep in it will return to claim it."

The woman spoke softly, with a kindly gleam in her large, gray eyes, and a brightening of her placid face when she mentioned Wallace's name.

Rose caught one of her large, toil-hardened hands in her own, and with tear-streaming eyes raised in mute appeal to her face exclaimed:

"Oh, madam, dear madam, Archie Wallace is my dearest friend; his mother died in my arms; let me occupy his room until he returns. I am an orphan, and utterly alone in this strange city, he will thank you for me if you do not turn me from your door. I have money to pay my way until I can obtain employment; please, kind madam, say that I may stay with you."

The earnest pleading words, falling like strains of sweet, sad music from the pretty tremulous lips, would have moved a heart more hardened than that of genial Mrs. Brown, and wiping her eyes with the corner of her blue gingham apron, she replied:

"Bless the child, does she think I have no heart at all in this worn out old body? You may stay and welcome, little one, your face is good and pure-looking, I do not think you would deceive

me; come, no thanks now, it is but a sorry home for such as you, but he has occupied it, and that will make it sacred, you need not blush so rosy red, I knew what love was when I was young like you; ah, me! what a pity those days can't last forever."

With a sly glance into Rose's blushing face, and a sigh for the days forever dead, Mrs. Brown led the way to the little low-ceiled room last occupied by Archie Wallace, and left Rose alone.

Until the night was fast advanced the poor girl knelt by the low window under the eaves, her face turned upward toward the star-gemmed sky, and her guileless heart uplifted to the throne of the all-powerful Judge who alone could save the man she loved so dearly.

She laid herself down to sleep at last, and such happy dreams came to her; Archie was with her again, in the old peaceful home. She felt the pressure of his lips upon her own, and the clasp of his strong arms about her.

She was oh, so unutterably happy while the dream lasted, and when she repressed the cry of disappointment that rose of her lips, and thought of her dreams as happy omens of the future that might hold more of joy than the past had ever known.

She was strangely hopeful and expectant this morning, Mrs. Brown's kindly manner and genial good nature inspiring her with a feeling of confidence and rest. She had no fear that Barton would find her here; but she would not venture outside the door for worlds. Until the noonday sun was high in the heavens she sat in the little attic room, merely tasting the meals Mrs. Brown carried up to her—thinking, thinking, till her brain seemed in a tangle, of the future and what it held in store for her.

Suddenly the sound of voices in the lower hallway attracted her attention. The tone of one of these voices was strangely familiar, and rising from her chair she slowly approached the door, her beautiful young face all aglow, her vivid blue eyes radiant with happiness, and her slender hands clasped on her breast in an attitude of thanksgiving.

"Tis surely his voice; I cannot be mistaken—oh, Archie! Archie! are my beautiful dreams to be realized?" she murmured, almost unconsciously descending the stairs, her curling golden hair falling cloud-like to her waist, and her black robes enhancing the matchless beauty of her exquisite face.

"Oh, Mr. Wallace, the sight of you does my old heart good. I knew you were innocent; I never for a moment believed you guilty," Mrs. Brown was saying just as the light footfall of Rose was heard on the carpetless stairway.

Archie Wallace, for it was indeed he, dropped the old woman's hand and looked up quickly. The sight of Rose's lovely, radiant face called an exclamation of joy to his lips, and he sprang forward as if to clasp her to his heart; but the recollection of their last meeting came up vividly before him. The outstretched arms dropped heavily to his side, the joyous light died out of his handsome face, and with a deep groan he sank down into a wooden chair and covered his eyes from the sight of the fair, false face that had come to mock him.

Mrs. Brown, like the sensible woman she was, left them together in the little parlor and returned to her duties in the kitchen, muttering as she went:

"Well, well, well, that was not the way lovers met in the days when I was young, and after such a parting too. Perhaps he thinks she believes him guilty—silly boy—why, the pretty little creature worships him. They will be as happy as turtle doves in half an hour."

For some time after Mrs. Brown had left them an embarrassed silence reigned between them, which Archie was the first to break.

Looking up into the face of Rose, who was standing pale and silent before him, he asked, with a ring of pain in his clear, deep voice:

"Rose, why do I meet you here? Where is Henry Barton? You left me in a prison cell for the shelter of his arms. One of the keepers told me you were to be Barton's wife. I would have choked him for a liar had I not seen you with my own eyes leaning on Barton's arm on entering

and descending from his carriage; and now I meet you here. Could he have provided no better home for you than this?"

There was a world of bitterness in his voice, and almost unconsciously he had arisen and was grasping Rose's arm tightly, and looking down in her face, as if he would fain read the inmost recesses of her heart.

She made no answer to his breathless question; but the poor, proud, tender eyes met his unfalteringly—full of reproachful pain—but with no look of guilt in their limpid, violet depths. One long intense gaze into azure orbs, that seemed the mirrors of her pure soul, and, doubts and fears alike forgotten, Wallace was kneeling at her feet, pouring out his love in broken, disjointed words, and pressing passionate kisses on the little hands he had imprisoned.

"My darling! my beloved! can you ever forgive me, that even though all the world condemned you, I could, for a moment, have believed you false to me?"

A soft, tremulous light broke over Rose's perfect face, like a ray of sunshine, and tremblingly, with a passionate, innocent rapture, she held out her arms, and, in an instant he had folded her close, close to his breast.

A crimson ray from the setting sun, entering through a chink in the shutter, fell full upon them; its beams lending a shadowy sweetness to the fair, blonde face, and making every silken hair gleam brightly, like waves of molten gold.

"See, darling, how brightly the sun shines on you. May its future be as bright as its rosy rays," the lover replied.

"But Archie, the sunlight is fading, let us pray God our happiness may not fade as swiftly," Rose replied, in a low, awed voice.

The sound of carriage wheels stopping before the door aroused them from their blissful love-dream.

Something of the brightness faded out of Rose's face, as visions of Henry Barton coming to claim her and force her away from Wallace's side flashed through her brain and caused her to cling more closely to him. Wallace had told her nothing of Barton's arrest, thinking she was aware of his movements; and, indeed, in the first moment of surprise at meeting her, forgetting everything but that he had seen her in Barton's arms.

A loud knock sounded upon the door, which was soon opened by Mrs. Brown, and Walter Greyson, his servant Paul, and a tall, legal-looking gentleman entered the apartment.

Rose's face paled, while Archie glanced from face to face in surprise. Mr. Greyson broke the spell of silence. Extending a hand to both Rose and Archie, he exclaimed:

"My dear young friends, 'tis of you we are in search. Wallace, this gentleman—pointing to the legal personage—is my lawyer, Mr. Hargrave. He has been aiding me in the search for Rose Michel, this girl by my side, whom, in the presence of you all, I acknowledge to be my own niece, the daughter of my dead sister Laura and her husband, Julian Michel, Count De Orme."

This announcement fell like a thunderbolt on at least two of the little group. Rose and Archie glanced from face to face, in unfeigned amazement; the former eager and expectant, the latter pale and silent; his heart seeming to die within him, as he began to realize the gulf that had so suddenly arisen between them. He, the penniless mechanic, and she, the beautiful heiress of proud Walter Greyson.

CHAPTER XLII.

CONCLUSION.

THE trial of Henry Barton came off just two weeks later, during which time Wallace remained in Boston, while Rose returned with her new-found uncle to his home in Lowell. Mr. Greyson had cordially invited the young engineer to visit her when he returned from the trial, for his dead sister's child would henceforth be denied no wish that he could gratify, and one look into her eloquent eyes told him how dear to her heart was Archie Wallace.

Notwithstanding the fact that Mr. Greyson engaged one of the most noted lawyers in Boston to

plead the cause of his disowned nephew, the trial went fearfully against him, it was clearly proven that he, Barton, with the aid of Theodore Miller, had himself broken into the safe, and taken the money, paying the miserly old porter a large sum for his share in fastening the guilt upon Archie. He held a secret power over Miller, being aware of the existence of Sadie Ray, Miller's deserted wife, and hence the wretched man's terror of him.

The evidence against Barton was fully confirmed by the old porter who, when brought to bay, confessed the whole affair, and Barton was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment, despite the eloquent pleading of his lawyer. The miserable man's despair can be better imagined than described. Deprived of his liberty, his child's fate unknown to him, doomed to labor among criminals all the best years of his life, what wonder that that he gnashed his teeth and tore his hair in mad, rebellious grief.

Mr. Greyson's white head was bowed to the dust in shame and sorrow. Henry Barton had once been very dear to him, and was he not his sister's child? He wept for his downfall many an hour in secret and alone, but made no attempt to pay him a farewell visit, his heart was too sore for that. He would spare neither money nor time in the attempt to recover the lost Clarice, but more than this, he would never do for Henry Barton.

After the trial Wallace paid Rose one visit in her beautiful new home to bid her farewell ere starting on a journey to the far West. His was far too proud and self-reliant a nature to admit of his taking advantage of Walter Greyson's generosity. He would try to win fortune and fame for himself, ere he would dare to hope that she might be his bride, and so he told her uncle, when that gentleman met him at the door of the stately residence which was now Rose's home.

His manly eloquent words, the ring of truth in his clear young voice, and the light of proud resolve in his brown eyes, won the lasting friendship of Walter Greyson.

"Heaven bless you, my boy, you are right. Rose is very young, she should see something of the world before she settles down to the life of a married woman; when you return she will be better capable of judging her own heart than she is at present. May God prosper you, and crown your effort with success."

With these words the speaker ushered Wallace into the presence of Rose, whose sweet young face was fairly radiant as she came forward to welcome him. Holding her close to his heart he told her all his plans for the future, and all the fond hopes he cherished of one day being worthy her priceless love. Kissing away the tears that flowed down her cheeks when he spoke of parting, and building such fairy castles of future joys.

"Darling, I will bind you by no vow; should you find among the brilliant throng who will worship at your shrine, one with whom you could be happy, let no thought of me intrude itself upon you, for, oh, my precious Rose, your happiness is dearer to me than my own life, and it would break my heart to think that I would be the means of robbing you of one moment's pleasure."

Long after he was gone these words rang in Rose's ears, and she smiled to think how impossible it would be for her to love another than the noble friend who had saved her from such a terrible fate.

Three years rolled slowly away on the wings of time.

In the golden gleam of a wintry twilight a bridal party were gathered in the spacious parlors of Walter Greyson's mansion, and sweet Rose Michel, in heavy trailing robes of white satin, sweeping veil of misty lace, and crown of delicate orange blossoms, stands with her Uncle Walter alone in the conservatory, previous to the ceremony that is to make her a wife.

She is radiantly beautiful, fairer than the angels, thinks the white-haired man whose eyes are fastened upon her peerless face with a look of adoration.

"My darling child, my own dear Rose, it almost breaks my heart to give you up; you seem a part

of my very life, but I know that the man to whom you have been so faithful all these years is well worthy of my treasure. He has returned to you rich and prosperous, he loves you with a devotion that has never wavered, and may God reward him and spare you long to each other."

"Amen," echoed a deep, rich voice, and together Archie Wallace and Rose Michel knelt in the sweet solemn hush of the twilight to receive the blessing of Walter Greyson, ere joining the brilliant throng gathered together to see them united in the holy bands of matrimony.

Seven years later.

Once again we raise the curtain on our drama of real life.

A pleasant family group are seated near the open windows of a stately residence in the city of Boston. It is summer time, and the balmy air entering through the low French windows, lifts the snow-white hair from the brow of an old gentleman who sits looking off toward the western hills, behind which the sun is setting like a huge ball of fire.

It is our old friend, Walter Greyson. A little more aged and worn-looking, a little more feeble than when last we met him, but with a look of infinite happiness and peace upon his calm, pale face. Opposite him, at the other window, Archie Wallace stands, one arm thrown caressingly round the gentle, blue-eyed wife.

"Papa! what makes mamma look so sorry, she almost cried just now?" asked the sweet lisping voice of their only child, the little golden-haired Minnie, the treasure of their hearts.

The mother looked down upon her child with a tender smile, then dropping her head on her husband's shoulder, said softly:

"Minnie's eyes are sharp, Archie, I have indeed been feeling sad to-night; do you know that Henry Barton's term of imprisonment has expired. How strange that Uncle Walter should have failed to find any trace of his child, and how sad that he should have neither friends nor home to come—"

A quick exclamation from Walter Greyson interrupted further conversation.

"A woman has fallen on the sidewalk, Archie, she seemed to have been coming to our door."

Scarcely waiting to hear Mr. Greyson's last words, Archie had darted out of the house and raised the prostrate figure from the ground, while Rose dismissed little Minnie to the nursery, and prepared a couch for the reception of the unfortunate stranger. It was a young girl of seventeen or eighteen years of age, with a face that would have been extremely handsome but for the marks of dissipation and fast living which were undeniably written upon it. Walter Greyson turned pale when the girl's face was revealed to him, and put his hand before his eyes as if to shut out some terrible sight. It was plainly evident that the girl was dying, and they could do nothing for her but put a few drops of wine between her lips; this revived her, and she raised herself on her elbow and looked around her, pushing back the tangled golden hair from her temples.

"Is this the house of Walter Greyson?" she asked, feebly, and when answered in the affirmative continued: "Last night, in a den kept by my father—Harper is his name—I met Henry Barton. There was a fight between him and Harper. A hard and terrible story was then told. I had been called Clara Harper. Last night my true name was revealed. I am Clarice Barton. My true father drove a knife through his own heart when he was told that this wretched, degraded, drunken outcast was all that remained of his child. I am too weak to tell all the story. My father lies in the morgue. Harper sent me here to tell you all that father's dying words were—'Rose Michel is avenged.'"

The terrible revelation was spoken in short, gasping breaths, and ere the little awe-stricken group around the dying girl had recovered from the terrible shock it gave them, Clarice Barton had breathed her last. Rose Michel was indeed avenged.

The returned convict and his unfortunate daughter were buried side by side, and from the day when the soil hid their coffins from sight their names were never mentioned by those whose lives Henry Barton would have rendered desolate as his own had been had not the God of the orphan watched over and protected the sweet little factory girl—Rose Michel.

[THE END.]

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| 19 The Broken Betrothal; or, LOVE VERSUS HATE. By Mary Grace Halpine. | 47 Because She Loved Him; or, HOW WILL IT END. By Alice Fleming. | 75 The Black Lady of Duna. By J. S. Le Fanu. Ready April 19th. |
| 20 Orphan Nell, the Orange Girl; or, THE WITCHES OF NEW YORK. Agile Penne. | 48 In Spite of Herself; or, JENNETTE'S REPARATION. By S. R. Sherwood. | 76 Charlotte Temple. By Mrs. Rowson. Ready April 26th. |
| 21 Now and Forever; or, WHY DID SHE MARRY HIM. By Henrietta Thackeray. | 49 His Heart's Mistress; or, LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT. By Arabella Southworth. | 77 Christian Oakley's Mistake. By the author of "John Halifax, Gentleman." May 3. |
| 22 The Bride of an Actor. By the author of "Alone in the World," etc., etc. | 50 The Cuban Heiress; or, THE PRISONER OF LA VINTRESSE. By Mrs. Mary A. Denison. | 78 My Young Husband; or, A CONFUSION IN THE FAMILY. By Myself. Ready May 10th. |
| 23 Leap Year; or, WHY SHE PROPOSED. By Sara Claxton. | 51 Two Young Girls; or, THE BRIDE OF AN EARL. By Alice Fleming. | 79 A Queen Amongst Women. By the author of "Dora Thorne." Ready May 17th. |
| 24 Her Face Was Her Fortune. By Eleanor Blaine. | 52 The Winged Messenger; or, RISKING ALL FOR A HEART. By Mary Reed Crowell. | |
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| 26 Without a Heart; or, WALKING ON THE BRINK. By Prentiss Ingraham. | 54 One Woman's Heart; or, SAVED FROM THE STREET. By George S. Kaine. | |
| 27 Was She a Coquette? or, A STRANGE COURTSHIP. By Henrietta Thackeray. | 55 She Did Not Love Him; or, STOOPING TO CONQUER. By Arabella Southworth. | |
| 28 Sybil Chase; or, THE GAMBLER'S WIFE. By Mrs. Ann S. Stephens. | 56 Love-Mad; or, BETROTHED, MARRIED, DIVORCED AND —. By W. M. Turner, M. D. | |

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